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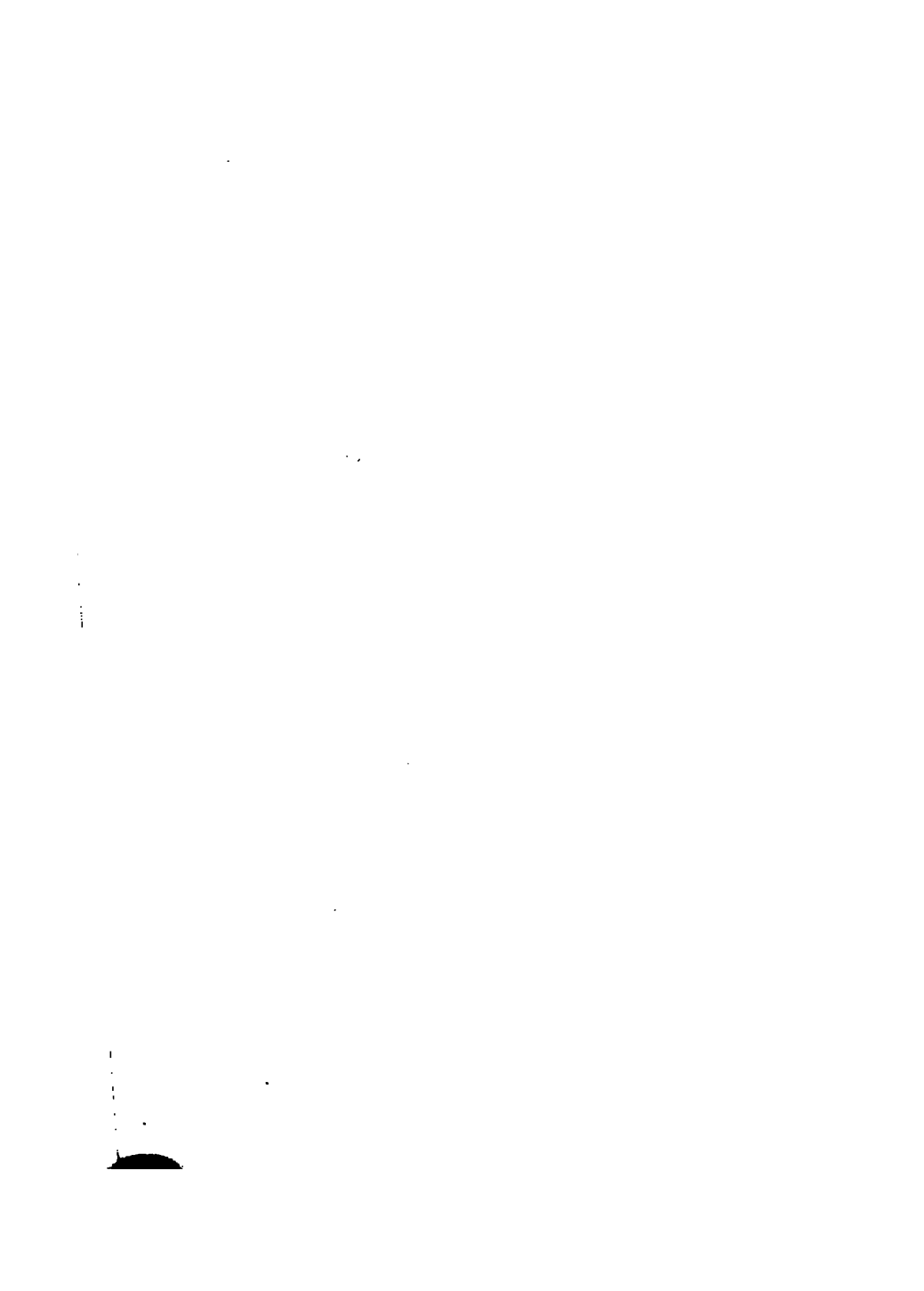
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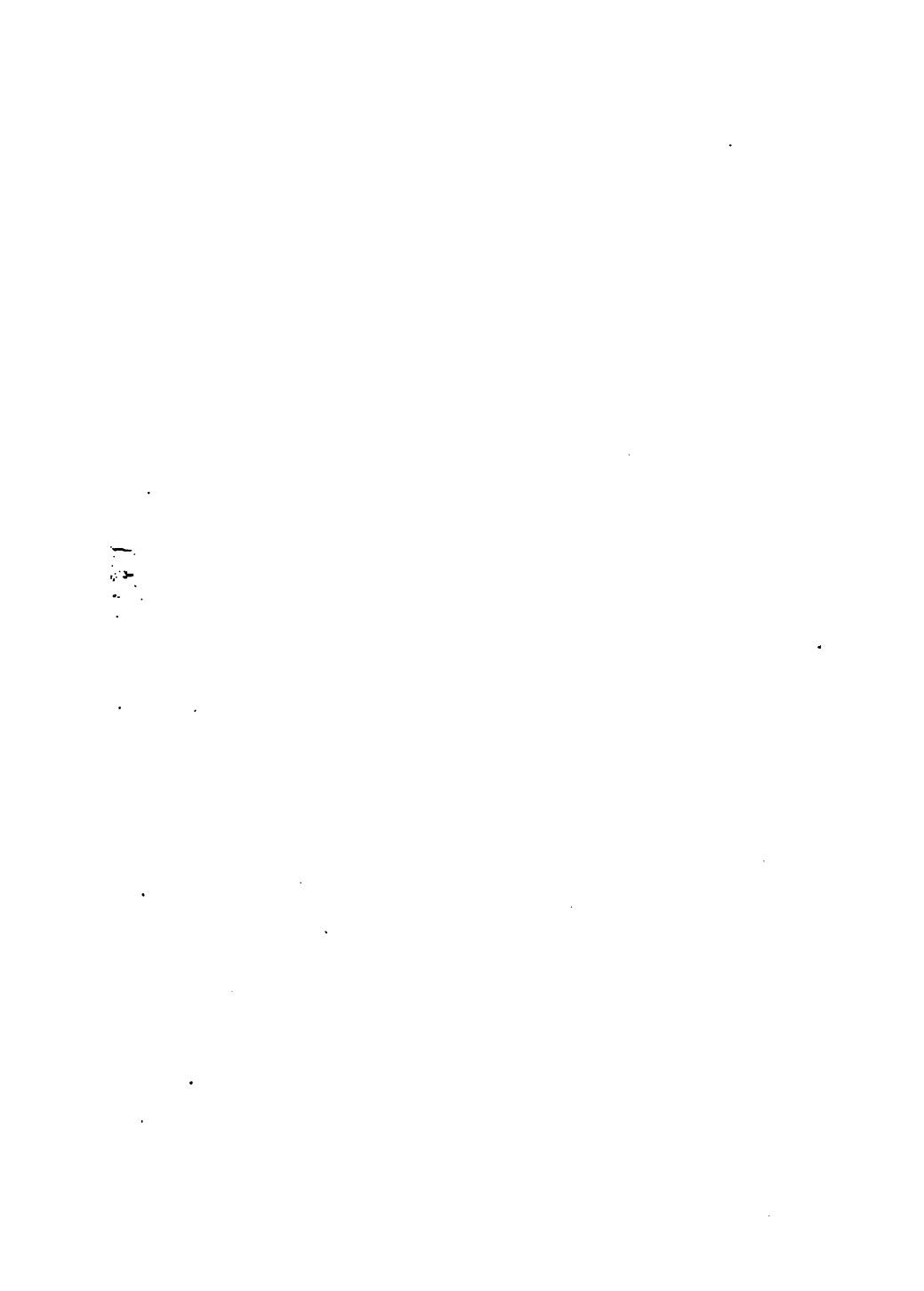
SIX STARS

By
NELSON
LLOYD









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SIX STARS



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ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS



Drawn by A. B. Frost.

“Old Captain,” he said, half aloud

—See



IN STONE

CHARLES MCGILL, EDITOR
NEW YORK, 1954



SIX STARS

BY

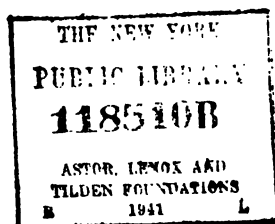
NELSON LLOYD

AUTHOR OF "THE SOLDIER OF THE VALLEY,"
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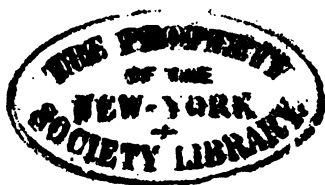
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1. The first part of the document is a list of names and titles, including "The Hon. Mr. Justice" and "The Hon. Mr. Justice".

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SIX STARS

THE THIRD AND A HALF GENERATION

GENERATIONS come in waves in Six Stars, and Willie Calker had not arrived in the natural course of events, but had moved in from the neighboring valley with his mother. The third generation had been but recently married off, and the fourth was rolling over the rag-carpets of the village. His was the third and a half. So he was alone in his boyhood. And in truth he had become the oldest man for a lad of his age Six Stars had ever seen, for worldly wisdom he had acquired as he sat unnoticed, unheeded, squeezed between the worthies of the store porch; and a higher knowledge he had attained as day after day he wandered along the creek, watching the fish sporting there, or followed the tinkle of the cow-bells through the hemlock woods, with his

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dog Jimmy at his heels. Through the long summer afternoons as he sat by the milldam, idly twirling pebbles into the placid water, he had explored his own brain; he had travelled far beyond the mountains and the ridges that formed the valley; he had wandered the world over, always keeping in sight of the old stone mill, and in sound of the splashing water-wheel. Thus he had conceived an inward contempt for the three generations that spent so much of their time on the store bench, but he sat at their feet and absorbed such stray bits of wisdom as they let fall. He borrowed their county paper, and heard the faint echoes of the great world without.

For a long time the store underestimated Willie. In fact, it never even troubled itself estimating him at all. He was nothing but a boy, the only one in the village, whose loneliness entitled him to a place on the bench as long as he did not become intrusive with his childlike opinions or embarrassing questions. The store even tolerated him to the extent of allowing him to make a guess on the weight of Moses Pole's famed Chester White hog. It

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was here that the trouble began. This was the Black Friday in the history of Six Stars.

Just two days before that particular Friday, Willie Calker celebrated his twelfth birthday, and from some place off there in the blue, a mysterious place called Kansas, a place no more distant and no more unreal than Heaven itself, there had come to him a bright silver quarter. It was the gift of the grandmother he had never seen, and had it been brought to him in the bill of a raven, instead of in the semi-weekly mail, he could not have been more astounded. It took him two days to recover his astonishment, and then he began to cast about for something to do with it. It was the enormousness of the sum that overwhelmed him. To many lads of his age it would have represented no more than a jarful of those beautiful yellow lemon-sticks that adorned the shelf in the store. To Willie Calker, lemon-sticks were things to be measured in pennies; quarters were the measure of the rolling hills. He had been lifted above the candy-shelf. He was a man of means. As became a man of means, he must stroll to the store—not with

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an idea of purchasing mere sweets, but possibly with an eye on the building itself.

The Six Stars store is a fine bit of property, standing where the ridge road and the turnpike meet, commanding a view of the milldam, and beyond that of the scrub country that slopes away to the southward, getting higher and higher until it breaks down into the great valley, where the farms are rich and the barns all white and green. The boy paused on the steps and looked away to where a line of tree tops fringed into the sky. He thought of that valley beyond. He had had glimpses of it as he stood there at the head of the ridge that jutted into it. It was so different from this, his own land of rough woods, and choppings, and clearings and stone-covered farms, that calling the Elysium to mind sufficed to alter any intention he had of making his friend Smith an offer for his "General Emporium." But he stepped within, anyway, just to see what was doing.

In spite of his wealth and his grand plans, Willie Calker could not but halt before the counter and give a wistful glance at the yellow lemon-sticks, wishing perhaps that he was a

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boy again with a solitary penny to spend as his mouth willed, and not a man with a quarter and a mind. He grasped his fortune a bit tighter in his hand, and, as if to prove his mastery over self, gazed defiantly at the alluring jar.

Behind him sounded the rasping cackle of Martin Holmes, the sole surviving representative of the first generation. "Well, sonny, it looks like you'll take a guess, eh?"

The old man made a demonstration with his cane, threw back his head, stuck out his white beard and performed a short series of facial gymnastics, the usual evidences of his merry mood. His gibe was followed by a chorus of guffaws from the bench and from the counter, from the nail-keg in the corner, from the empty egg-crate behind the stove.

Willie flushed. His eyes moved from the jar to the cigar-box on the shelf below it, from which arose this placard:

Hog gessin contest on Moses Poles Chester White 25 cents a gess Butcherin next wensday.

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The lad wheeled about and faced the generations above him.

"Mebbe you'd like two guesses, or mebbe four, Willie," said Martin in his most insinuating tones. Then he clapped a hand so hard on the knee of Lucien Spade, who sat next to him, that the bark-peeler gave vent to a cry of pain that sent the store into paroxysms of laughter again.

Willie's fighting blood was up. Dreams of vast possessions faded away before the stern realities of the moment.

"How many is comin' in, Martin?" he asked in the deepest tone he could command, with his chest cramped as it was in a three-year-old jacket, and his throat hampered by an enormous woolen muffler.

The old man's reply was drowned in a general burst of laughter.

"How many is comin' in?" demanded the lad again. But this time he drew from his pocket a bright silver coin and twirled it carelessly about in his hand.

The effect was instantaneous. Martin

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seized his beard and pulled at it reflectively as he stared at the boy

Ned Smith, leaning over the counter, broke the silence:

"Sence you are showin' the color of your money, Willie, they is ten in already—still."

"Ten," said Willie meditatively. "That means two-fifty if I win."

"If you wins!" cried the venerable Holmes. "Well, I'll swan!"

He pointed a quivering finger at the diminutive, the easy figure there before him. Martin was unrivalled at guessing the weight of a hog. So expert was he that it was an established rule that he should pay an additional dime for the privilege of competing. No one knew this better than Willie Calker. And now the picture of this chit defying, not the store, but him, Martin Holmes, brewed a storm of emotion, mingled anger and merriment, beneath the old man's coat. He could only shake his finger and sputter.

"It ain't right, Ned," broke in Moses Pole. "It ain't right fer you uns to let him resk his money on no hog guessin'."

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"It ain't, it ain't," chimed in Martin Holmes, just recovering his power of speech. "An' you knows it, Ned Smith, an' you, Lush Spade, an' you, Moses Pole. Do you s'pose I want to tech his money?"

"Ned," said Willie, standing with his fists in his pockets, looking up into the storekeeper's face, ignoring the mingled cries of approval and disapproval behind him, "be Moses's Chester White you uns mean the one that had his ear tore off in the barb-wire fence?"

"Personal friend o' yours, Willie?" old Holmes put in cheerfully.

"Personal friend?" returned the boy coolly. "I should say he was, Martin. Why, I've know'd that old Chester White fer years, an' such bein' the case, I'll take one guess."

With that he laid his fortune on the counter.

The question had its moral side, and, to do the store justice, it revolted at the picture of the unsophisticated boy staking his money on a guess. He would not be gambling, of course. Gambling was a vice, a sin, a crime. The preachers had always put particular stress on

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that idea when they pounded the pulpits and hurled forth their warnings against the dangers of horse-racing, the winecup and other such pleasant sins that the valley, by reason of its remoteness and poverty, had heard of but could never enjoy. Gambling was associated with cards. Its evils were presented pictorially in tracts, showing shirt-sleeved young men sitting around tables burdened with bottles and money. The store had never seen these same abandoned creatures represented as staking fortunes on the weight of a hog. Hence it placed its loved sport without the ban.

So, had Willie Calker faltered as he laid his money on the counter, the store would have arisen in one grand protest. But he was so firm, so quick, so self-possessed, that he seemed to take on for the moment the proportions of a man. The store was awed. It watched him in silence as he picked up a pencil and thoughtfully, but with studied care, eyed the point. Then, on a slip of paper, he scrawled his name and the few figures that gave his estimate of the weight of Moses Pole's Chester White.

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Willie Calker won the guessing. He was within a pound and a half of the actual weight of his corpulent four-footed friend, and Martin Holmes, the peerless, lost by a pound. His gibe on that Black Friday had cost him dear, for now, with the enormous sum of two dollars and a half at his command, the boy was a capitalist, and when the name of Aaron Jones appeared above the cigar-box, he ventured two guesses on the blacksmith's wonderful Jersey Red, and one was within three pounds of the actual weight. Martin Holmes was short by ten. This was in itself most remarkable, for in years he had not put in figures so far wrong. In fact, he had had the game down to so fine a point as to disdain to call it guessing at all. He always referred to it as "estymatin'." The result on the Chester White unnerved him. That on the Jersey Red routed him. When the sign was hoisted for McMitt's Berkshire, Martin boldly demanded the abrogation of the rule that he pay an extra dime to enter the contest. This was a great humiliation for the poor man. It was as though he were turning over the crown and sceptre before his time. It was an

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admission of defeat, a succumbing to the forces of decay. He, the first generation, was broken, and in his place was rising, not the second, as in the natural course of events, nor even the third, but the third and a half—that mere sprig of a boy who had never done anything but moon around the dam and the woods. The old man tried to pass it by as a “good un” on him, but the store saw through his forced jollity as he paid the regular quarter for the first time in years and handed in his “estymaye” on the Berkshire.

Willie Calker had taken four guesses, and again he won. Martin knew that he would. And so did Moses Pole. For three days preceding the butchering the pair had sat together on the bench, gloomily watching the box and declaring that it wasn't any use. Moses was inclined to think that the boy was not playing fair, but was using a charm. In this theory he had no support. Martin declared that there was nothing in superstition anyway, excepting as far as it affected rheumatism. But the store now felt that for the preservation of the sport something should be done. The grum-

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bling became more general and open when the boy took six guesses on Solomon Holloberger's black runt and won. When he bought eight chances on the Killowills' Poland China, and with one came within nine ounces of the actual weight, the store arose in revolt. This lad had no family to support, and there was no limit to his ability to guess. The welfare of the nation demanded prompt action, for not only the money of the valley, but of the county and the country was draining into this mere child's pockets.

The store did act. This was when Emerson Tumbell set the date for the killing of his wonderful hog that for two months had hardly been able to stagger about under its burden of rolling fat. Twice had Willie slipped up to Emerson's farm to inspect the beast. So his disappointment was keen when he went to deposit his guesses and saw added to the usual notice above the cigar-box the words, "Barrin' Willie Calker."

"Barrin' me," he repeated slowly. Then, turning to Martin Holmes, he asked: "What does that mean?"

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"It means, sonny," said the old man with much gravity, "that Emerson butchers a Monday, an' that guesses will be received as usual, barrin' Willie Calker. Willie is too young, sonny. It ain't right fer us folks to let a boy o' his tender years resk his money."

"Is that true, Ned?" asked the lad, appealing to the storekeeper, who was leaning over the counter, an amused smile on his face. Ned Smith nodded in the affirmative and smiled the more.

Without another word Willie Calker strode to the door and down the road. At the mill-dam he paused a moment to send a flat stone hurtling along the water. Then he crossed on the foot-log to his favorite retreat behind the mill, where, in seclusion, soothed by the swishing of the water over the wheel and the rumble of the grinding stones, he could think it all over. But hardly had he seated himself on a log when the venerable Holmes confronted him.

"Willie," said the old man soothingly.

"Well," returned the boy in frigid tones.

"Ye ain't mad, are ye?" the other asked softly.

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"Course I ain't. But you did it, you know you did," snapped the lad.

"Now, sonny, don't be hard on me. It was fer your good, really," pleaded Martin, seating himself on the log. "But, say, Willie, you might jest tell me somethin'."

"Tell you what?" snapped the boy.

"What does you allow that there Berkshire of Emerson Tumbell's weighs?"

"Martin, you shut me out, you know you did, didn't ye?"

"I didn't, sonny, really I didn't," answered he of the first generation. "I had a voice in the matter, I admit, but whatever I done was fer your sake, Willie. Gamblin' is a terrible wice."

"Gamblin'," retorted Willie. "This ain't gamblin', Martin. This is only hog guessin'. Why, I've heard you say a hundred times that they was different."

The old man raised a finger in warning. "Ssh!" He smiled knowingly. "You know, Willie, what I meant. You an' me understands one another, don't we? We are just about the smartest two in town—you an' me. Of course

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it's gamblin'. Gamblin's a wice. Them fellers at the store don't know it, an' I ain't the boy to spile their fun. You knows that—hey, sonny—you knows that. Now, what does you cal'late that hog o' Emerson's——”

“But, Martin, if it is a vice as you says, why should I tell you how many pound that animal weighs? Ain't that encouragin' you to do wrong?”

“There you go agin,” said the old man, laying a horny hand on the small knee that was knocking against his own boots. “It's this 'ay, Willie. Gamblin' is a wice. It biteth like an adder; it stingeth like a serpent. Oncet it gits its grip on you it don't let go. It ruins your life. An', Willie, it——”

“But, Martin——”

“Wait a bit an' hear me out. It ruins your life. It sappeth at the blood an' you are young yet, my boy, an' I couldn't see the wice gittin' its deadly holt on you. Fer me it ain't so bad, fer my summer-time is gone. I've only a few year left to spile. Now, what does you guess——” Martin stopped abruptly and drew a quarter from his pocket. He looked at it

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steadfastly for a minute. Then he smiled at Willie.

"Now, what does you guess will be the weight of Emerson's killin'?" he asked again.

The boy closed his eyes and held out a hand.

"I guess—I guess—I guess," he repeated slowly. His fingers tightened on the coin. "I guess five hundred an' eleven pound an' seven ounces," he said quickly.

He opened his eyes and looked rather wistfully at the old man. Martin says now that he winked at him.

It was a cold day when Emerson Tumbell butchered. His place is full three miles above the store on the cross-road that leaves the pike just beyond the covered bridge. Every farm in his neighborhood sent a delegation to witness the execution of the ponderous Berkshire, but Six Stars contented itself with a single emissary. Aaron Jones volunteered to ride up there on his white mule about noon, though it was a gray, melancholy morning, with a promise of snow in the clouds overhead, and the average man would have preferred the warmth of the store stove. Aaron was always accom-



Drawn by Albert Levering.

It was a cold day when Emerson Tumbell butchered.

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modating. The boys were anxious to get the news, and he was anxious to please the boys. But besides this he had an interest in the cigar-box. He had even boasted his confidence that the entire contents would find their way into his pockets. He had dreamed a dream, and in his sleep the actual weight of Emerson Tumbell's Berkshire had been revealed to him. Then the blacksmith had chuckled to himself and winked at the ceiling.

The group on the store porch watched the white mule and its rider until they were lost to sight in the gloom of the bridge; then they moved inside, and in silence watched the clock. When the hands pointed the noon hour, the whole company shuffled out to the old point of vantage and strained their eyes up the pike. It was not long until the white mule hove into view again. He was not really going at break-neck speed, but he did trot, so Aaron was bumping violently up and down, a rein in each hand, his elbows flapping like wings. The store lined up to receive him as he drew up and turned half around in the saddle and faced them. There was an expectant silence, in

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which the courier laid one hand on his chest and caught his lost breath. Then he smiled.

"Ye can't beat me, boys," he gasped, "I'm within seven ounces."

Ten faces fell. Ten hands went to ten chins to stroke them sadly.

"I told you I drumpt it true," cried Aaron, his voice now ringing clear and triumphant. "You uns laughed at my dream, but I got within seven ounces."

"What's the—eh—weight?" ventured Martin Holmes, after a moment of silence in the company.

"Five hundred an' eleven pound even," cried Aaron. He was half out of the saddle, and waved one long, booted leg in the face of the store. It was defiance he expressed thus, for as he reached the ground he shouted: "I guessed five hundred an' eleven pound, seven ounces. You uns can't beat it."

"I allow we can't, Aaron," Martin Holmes exclaimed, with a sudden, cheery ring in his voice. "But I think we'll have to dewide, me an' you, fer I guessed five hundred an' eleven pound, seven ounces, too."

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"Well, I'll swan!" broke in Moses Pole. "So did I. That was my estymayte—five hundred an' eleven pound, seven ounces."

"See here, Moses, you stop your joshin'," cried Martin angrily. "This is no time fer joshin'." The old man saw that several others wanted to speak, but he silenced them by raising a warning hand. "It ain't regular," he exclaimed. "Open the box, an' then we'll see how much we dewide."

So he led the company into the store.

"It's be fur the best estymaytin' I ever done," he said, as Smith was unfolding the paper slips on the counter. "It's wonderful guessin', an' I don't propose havin' the laurels drug offen me brow be no jolliers like Aaron or Moses there."

"Nor me," spoke up Lucien Spade from the outskirts of the crowd. "I guessed five hundred an' eleven pound, seven——"

Martin laughed.

"Boys—boys, no joshin'. It ain't regular," he cried, with a genial wave of his thin old arms.

"But I did guess five hundred an' eleven

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pound, seven ounces," shouted McMitt, the miller.

"Hol' on—hol' on," protested Martin, still more genially. "I don't mind a joke, Aleck, but wait till Smith gets th'oo openin' the guesses. Then we'll see who it's on."

It did not take long to find this out. When the storekeeper had transposed the figures to a long slip of paper, he eyed them quizzically for what seemed an age to the men before him.

"It's re-markable," he said at last.

"It was most a mighty good estymayte—only seven ounces off," chuckled old Holmes.

"Emerson's hog weighs five hundred an' eleven pound," said the storekeeper, rapping for order.

There was a strained silence.

"There are thirteen guesses, an' every man estymaytes the weight at five hundred an' eleven pound, seven ounces. Such bein' the case, we all git a quarter apiece."

"But that's all we paid in," Moses Pole protested.

Some one cried: "Willie Calker—where's Willie Calker?"

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It was a reckless thing to do. There was a sudden hush over the company. The men looked from one to the other, and not one said a word.

A moment passed, and Martin Holmes forced his way through the crowd that pressed about him, and went out on the porch, slamming the door behind him as a sign that he wished to be alone. For a long time he was alone, leaning against a pillar, watching the lazy ripples on the milldam. Had it been a bright day, the old man might have at least grinned a bit over his defeat and the defeat of the whole store company. But he could hear the splash of the water over the millwheel, and it was cold and cheerless music. All around him the dry bones of the year were rattling—in the limbs that crackled under the brisk wind, in the leaves that bowled along the hard road, in the whirl of the few songless birds that shot to and fro. A half-score of sheep were huddled in the protection of the blacksmith shop, baaing to keep warm. The valley was in no mood to cheer him up.

Suddenly a sharp report rang down the slope

SIX STARS .

from the woods. He looked up quickly. Again he heard it, and still again.

“Who’s a-shootin’ up there on the ridge, Earl?” he called to one of the fourth generation who chanced to be passing in pursuit of a flock of geese.

The lad halted and pulled his muffler down from his mouth.

“Willie Calker,” he cried. “He has got a new revolver.”

“Mighty souls!” said Martin Holmes.

THE BEST GUN IN THE VALLEY

THEN I ups with the gun," said Harvey Homer. Suiting the action to the word, he lifted the butt of the ancient piece to his shoulder, aiming right at Amos Inklin's head. The drover dodged hastily, seeking the protection of the big egg-stove.

"Hold on there!" he shouted "Mebbe it's loadened."

Harvey dropped the butt to the floor with great deliberation. "As I was saying when you interrupted me, I ups with the gun an'—

"Now, see here, Harvey," cried Amos angrily, "if you are goin' to ups with it agin, I want to know if it's loadened. This store ain't Laurel Ridge, an' my head ain't a coon."

"Is—it—loadened, Harvey?" said old Martin Holmes, laying a hand on Homer's knee and wiggling his leg at every word. "My pap's first ccusin was kilt be an absent-minded man

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illustrated how he shot a wild-cat. Is—it—loadened?”

“I forget,” replied the hunter testily. “Do you fellers think I can mind every time I shoot it?” He paused a moment and laid his forefinger thoughtfully between his eyes. “I allow it is loadened, but jest to make sure——” He drew the hickory ramrod from its home and sent it rattling down the barrel. It came to a stop with a thud, and he shut one eye and critically inspected the protruding end of the stick. “It—is—loadened,” he cried triumphantly.

From behind the counter Ned Smith, the storekeeper, broke in with a gentle protest. “We don’t mind you uns tellin’ us about shootin’, but mebbe before you go pintin’ around that ’ay it ’ud be sensible to unloaden it.”

“There’s two fingers o’ powder, two buck an’ a ball in there,” cried the hunter angrily, shaking the rifle. “That’s what you’d have me go waste. You uns talk like a gun hadn’t no sense. Besides, there ain’t no cap, an’——”

“Now, Harvey, now, Harvey,” said Martin Holmes gently. “Don’t get all het up. I never

THE BEST GUN IN THE VALLEY

seen a gun yit as was overgifted with brains. A rifle is fickler than a woman; you otter know that, Harvey. You otter know that the less waddin' you has pertectin' you, the harder she kicks. An' if the average well-balanced musket gits it inter its head it's goin' to go off, off it'll go, whether it has a cap on or not; you otter know that, Harvey."

Harvey did not know it. He did not care. He did not need any information about guns. But if the store was full of fellows who had no trust in a rifle that had gone fifty years without harming no one, then he allowed that he supposed it would be best to unloaden it. He hurled this forth as he shuffled to the door. The store followed him, old Holmes bringing up in the rear, with a finger carefully tucked in each ear.

Standing on the porch, Homer gave one contemptuous glance at the little knot of men behind him, and, taking careless aim at a gray cloud that was hovering away off in the distance, fired.

There was a loud squawking of chickens and a flutter of wings; a series of wild squeals by

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the mill, where a few hogs had been huddled in the sun; a chorus of ba-a-s, as a flock of sheep rushed down the road and made the bridge by the blacksmith shop ring with their hoofs. This was to be expected, for it always followed any startling sound in Six Stars. The unexpected was a human cry of dismay and then a groan that arose from a light blue heap in the road, just beneath the smoking muzzle. The store turned pale. The light blue heap took form, and the men on the porch breathed easier, for now, erect before them, his old army overcoat gray with dust, his outstretched hands holding a bicycle, which he was critically inspecting, stood Aaron Kallaberger. He sent the wheels spinning around, and, having satisfied himself that the machine was not damaged, he smiled.

“I tho’t it was Sumter,” he said.

Though Aaron Kallaberger did not take part in the defence of that famous fortress, as might be implied from this remark, his nine months’ service in the Civil War, all in the hospital, had cast a heroic glamour over his whole life, and, with a pension added and an



Drawn by A. B. Frost.

The store turned pale.

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army overcoat, he was well entitled to use martial terms. But Harvey did not like it.

“Did you allus tumble over like that when they was any shootin’?” he cried angrily. “A-screechin’, an’ a-groanin’, an’ a-scarin’ the enemy to death, thinkin’ they’d killed ye.”

“I never rode under a cannon before,” replied Aaron pleasantly.

“A cannon!” The very suggestion was so extravagant to Harvey that he laughed. “Why, this here is the best gun in Pennsylvany. Look at it, Aaron! Handle it—mind the copper patch on the stock—see how easy the trigger pulls—an’ that there ramrod—toughest hickory in the walley, an’ whittled out by my old grandpap.” He thrust the barrel into the hands of the veteran, who had propped himself against the bicycle and received the piece rather gingerly. “A cannon! Why, if my pap heard you say that he’d turn in his grave. Grandpap got it first, an’ they allus sayd he carried it in the Revolution—look there—you can see where it was a flintlock. Pap changed it fer caps. There’s a placet in the stock to keep bullets an’ patches—all the

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modern conveniences, you see, with the experience of age. Jest take a sight with her, Aaron, an' mind how light she is."

The veteran lifted the heavy gun and aimed it. In the delight of sighting down the long barrel at a new white shingle on the roof of the mill, he straightened up and the bicycle toppled over. Harvey scrambled to pick it up. That was a fatal move to him, for a wheel spun around with a musical purr, scattering silvery shafts of light.

"Mighty, but it goes easy," he cried. "Where did you git it, Aaron?"

"I wonder if I could hit that chicken if this here was loadened?" replied Kallaberger, swinging the rifle around and bringing it to bear on a hen resting on a near-by fence.

"How fur will this here travel?" inquired Harvey, a little louder.

"Sights, but it feels good!" the veteran answered, aiming at a cloud. "I ain't had a musket of me own since the war—got out of the habit. What you bet I couldn't take the weather wane offen Inklin's house yander?"

"How much did you give fer this here?"

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cried Harvey, laying a restraining hand on the other's arm.

"For what—oh, that," said Aaron, with a contemptuous glance at the machine. "I almost give me life fer it a couple of times. As it was, I traded with young Harvey Whoople fer ten dollars, a churn, an' two augers."

Harvey's eyes opened wide in amazement. "They is expensive, ain't they?" he said meekly.

He was disappointed. The bicycle was in his hands, and he wanted it. He had read about these machines in the paper; a few times he had seen strangely garbed men from the county-town flying along the turnpike on them; but to him they had seemed as difficult to attain as wings. Now he held one in his hands; he knew a man who could ride one; he had heard the musical purr of the wheels and gazed into the hypnotic light of the spokes. It did not seem so unattainable, yet the price was beyond him. The churn and two augers he could give, but ten dollars——

"What 'll you take fer this here rifle, Harvey?" Aaron asked, aiming at the head of a

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sheep that was standing on the bridge blinking at the sun.

"I'll trade even," Harvey replied. He pointed to the bicycle, but he was so amazed at his audacity that his voice broke and he had to cough.

Kallaberger laughed.

"Even!" he shouted. "Mighty, man, talk sense—ten dollars an' the gun—how's that fer a bargain?"

"Yon is the best gun in the walley," Homer answered with spirit. "My own grandpap whittled that ramrod."

But Kallaberger was without sentiment. He insisted on fixing the value of the rifle on the basis of its present usefulness, entirely eliminating family tradition. And Aaron was a clever man, for he stood by in contemptuous silence while Harvey spun the wheels again for a very long time. Then he made a new proposition.

"I've heard tell a heap about your spring-bed, Harvey," he said. "Now, what 'ud you uns say to bicycle fer gun an' spring-bed. You haven't no use fer a spring-bed."

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"It's most a'mighty comf-table sleepin'," returned Harvey feebly.

"But when you're asleep you don't know whether you're comf'table or not," the veteran argued with much spirit. "If you are sleepin' you are unkawnsconscious. Fer an unkawnsconscious man a straw tick is as good as two springs."

"There is somethin' in that," the other assented. He tried for a moment to recall a time when the spring-mattress had added to his comfort. He could not, for he had slept just as soundly before he got it. Sleep always came to him when his head touched a pillow, and the only real pleasure he had derived from his recent investment was in telling the others at the store what a luxurious thing it was.

Again he spun the wheels, and they won the argument. Family tradition was forgotten. Grandpap whittling the hickory ramrod was forgotten. Pap's pride in the best gun in the valley was forgotten.

"It's a bargain, Aaron," the young man said.

Harvey Homer slept that night on his old

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corn-shuck mattress. He had pulled it down from the loft of his little log-house after Kal-laberger had driven away with the springs lashed to his buckboard, and Harvey did not regret his bargain, for he sat up late, spinning the wheels and pointing out to his hound, Colonel, the interesting parts of the mechanism. He had even tried mounting and dismounting in the narrow limits of his kitchen, so that it was a weary head that touched the pillow, and he was soon unconscious to the discomfort of the corn shucks. As if in proof of his theory, he slept unusually late the next morning, and it was broad daylight when he arose.

First he awakened the fire in the ten-plate stove, and, when it was roaring lustily, he turned to take the measure of the day. The valley was white with the first snow of the year. It had crept up in the night and covered the shrivelled fields, transforming the gaunt trees into giant finger-corals, pitching rank on rank of tall, white tents at the head of the slope, where yesterday had been an expanse of stunted pines. The man at the window, peering through the frosted glass, had seen too

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many winters come to waste a glance on the fences, once so broken, so brown and decrepit, now a delicate network, stretching to and fro over the valley, and glittering in the sun that was just rising above the eastward ridges. He was looking away to the woods, and what held his gaze was not the tall white tents there, but three small black objects moving across the clearing. Long and earnestly he watched them as they went, single file, over the field and were again lost in the cover.

"Turkeys, Colonel!" Harvey cried. "Wild turkeys."

This announcement made the hound wriggle all over, and he raised himself against the window, and, with his warm nose, tried to rub away the frost, that he too might see what was doing.

"Breakfast first, Colonel," said Harvey gayly, patting the dog's head. "Breakfast, an' then——"

He paused abruptly. His gaze was fixed in the corner, where the gun had leaned so long.

"An' then—an' then——" He rubbed his eyes to make sure of them. "Why, Colonel, I

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never tho't o' you when I done it. You can't ride a bicycle, can you?"

The hound ran to the door, and began to sniff at the knob and whine. Then he turned to the corner where the rifle should have been, and, sitting on his haunches, threw back his head and gave a long howl.

"It's the redicklestest thing I ever done," said Harvey mournfully. "'I don't blame you a bit, Colonel. Why, had I stopped an' tho't o' you, I wouldn't 'a' swapped that gun fer ten bicycles."

Still more was the full meaning of his bargain impressed on him, for, as he stepped outside after breakfast, bound for the barn to care for his horses and his cow, he sank to his boot-tops in a snowdrift. The hound floundered after him, and, not ten steps from the door, they crossed the trail of a fox, where the wind, broken by the house, had failed to cover the tracks. Then a rabbit darted from a brush pile and scampered away over the fields. The hound went pitching after it, but, pausing at the crest of the hill, he looked back to see his master standing helplessly at the barn-yard

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gate, so he turned and went disconsolately home.

“It’s no use, Colonel,” Harvey said, hardly daring to meet the inquiring gaze of his dumb companion. “We might jest as well set down patient-like an’ wait till the winter goes. Mebbe we can make up fer it be goin’ bicyclin’; but jest now, I s’pose, we’ll be overrun with game—me an’ you—smothered under partridges an’ foxes an’ sech. Why, when you was gone I was looking fer some bears, or mebbe a tagger or an ellyphant or so to come a-moseyin’ round here any minute. I allow we’d better keep in doors, me an’ you, an’ read the almenick.”

The hours moved very slowly that morning. The bicycle wheels had lost their fascination for Harvey, and he found small comfort in getting out his fishing tackle for an overhauling. It seemed so foolish to work over hooks and lines that could not be used for months. To make it more humiliating, Irving Kallaberger opened the door, without the formality of a knock, and surprised him at this humble occupation. Harvey apologized, and started to explain, but Irving cut him short, and, in that

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polished way that has made his family famous in the valley, assured him that it was most sensible to prepare in early December for fishing in late April. With this the visitor removed his overcoat and muffler and took a chair by the stove. He had his fiddle with him, and was bound for the Hockewouts' place. The Hockewouts were giving a dance that night, and he was going to play. It is a good five miles there from Six Stars, and though Harvey's was but one-fifth of the way, he had decided to drop in and rest up and warm.

Harvey suggested a tune, and, going to the door, called Colonel in to hear it. Irving graciously acceded to the request, and, taking his violin from the paper flour-bag, began to play. Under the spell of the music, Harvey Homer forgot the lost rifle and the mocking game, and leaned back on two legs of his chair, beat time with his feet, and half hummed and half sang to the tune of "The Old Gray Horse that Died in the Wilderness." By his side the hound sat on his haunches, his tail free to pound the floor rhythmically, his head thrown back and his eyes fixed in ecstasy on the ceiling. Once he

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gave vent to a long-drawn howl, but a sharp stroke of his master's hand suppressed him, so that thereafter he contented himself with a series of gurgling wails. For a half hour Irving played, twice repeating his repertory, from "The Old Gray Horse" to "The Devil's Dream," and he was about to start on a third round, when Harvey interrupted him by shuffling his feet.

"They is a heap o' consolation in a fiddle, ain't they?" he said.

"I jest wish I had nothin' else to do," replied Irving, with enthusiasm. "A man with a fiddle is never lonely. It allus agrees with you. If you feels low down an' mournful, out comes the fiddle—out comes 'The Old Gray Horse that Died in the Wilderness.' You feels ca'am-like an' peaceful—out comes the fiddle—out comes 'Mother an' Me' or 'Jordan's Strand.' Mebbe you are special happy an' joyous—out comes 'The Devil's Dream' or 'Slatter-up-the-Ding-dang.' Why, Harvey, it's a wonder to me you never took up music."

"I don't know how," replied Harvey. "I can't."

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"Can't!" exclaimed Irving. "Can't! Of course you can. Fiddlin' is natural. You never had a fiddle, did you? So you can't play. S'posin' you never had a fork an' knife—you couldn't eat, could you? Music is the food of the human soul, as Pete Ciders sais. Give a baby a fiddle when you give him a knife an' fork, an' he'll play as natural as he'll eat. Now, ain't that true, Harvey?"

Harvey thought that possibly it was. If he had any doubts on the question, Irving did not give them time to form into vigorous opposition, for he placed the fiddle in Homer's hands.

"Now, try it oncet, an' see if it ain't like learnin' to swim—a stroke at a time."

The bow was drawn over the strings, and the fiddle gave a long wail. Colonel followed with a howl.

"It's wonderful," said Harvey. "I'd no idee it was so easy."

Up went the bow—forth came a fire of short, sharp screeches. The dog fell in with a succession of yelps.

"Why, it's just tuned to me an' Colonel,

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ain't it, Irving?" Harvey cried. "Now, I must git me one of these."

"Didn't I tell you?" was Irving's triumphant rejoinder. "Of course it's easy. Oncet you can play the notes separate, all you have to learn is fittin' them together."

Another long soft wail!—the cry that a lonely man suppresses. What a comfort it is to sit this way and pour forth your joys and your woes! A sweep of the bow and you hurl forth defiance at the world. A swing of the arm, slowly, softly, and you whisper some tenderer emotion. The world does not understand. It thinks you fiddle. Colonel knows! Colonel feels it! To the depths of his dog-soul the cry of the fiddle strikes.

"You like it, eh, old boy?" said Harvey, scratching the hound's head with the end of the bow. "Well, mebbe I'll git one of these, jest to play for you."

"You might have that one," put in Irving, most opportunely, "if you really want it, an' will promise to learn, an' won't spile it. I think a heap o' that violin, an' you are the only man in the walley I'd trust it with."

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Harvey was greatly flattered at this faith in his own artistic future, and promised to take the best of care of it. But what was he to give in return. Somehow Irving's eyes wandered to the bicycle, and rested there. Harvey asked what he would give with the fiddle for the wheel. At this young Kallaberger laughed outrageously. The real question was what he would get to boot. The bicycle would be of no service until the snow was gone, and that meant months, but the fiddle could be used day and night, winter and summer, year in and year out.

"The value of any article, Harvey," said he didactically, "is dependent on what you gits outen it. They is nothin' to be got outen that wheel for months. But look at the fiddle. Its worth depends on the quantity of music it 'll give. That is limited only be your muscle an' your time. There's the beauty of a fiddle—you can't empty it."

"Now, I never tho't o' that before, Irving, said Harvey apologetically. "Mebbe I otter give you somethin' extry with the wheel."

Irving really felt that he should. Were he

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dealing with any other man in the valley, he would insist on it, but it was a great deal to know that the loved instrument was in good hands—hands that would care for it and get from it the best that it could give forth. On the other side, Harvey entertained no such feelings toward the bicycle. He regarded the machine with resentment, for by the flash of its spokes and the purr of its wheels he had been lured from the paths trodden by his father and his father's father. He had forgotten them. The old hickory ramrod alone, whittled and seasoned with an infinity of care, was worth a dozen of these factory baubles. So when he saw the last of the bicycle, as Irving Kallaberger was pushing it down the road through the snow-drifts, he laughed and turned to his new treasure.

The sun had swung around far enough to be looking in the westerly window, when Harvey laid down the fiddle and began to rub his elbows and his wrists, which were crooked and stiff from the hours of earnest sawing. The hound had long since retired behind the stove, refusing to be further moved by his master's music,

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except at intervals to lift his head and give an angry growl of protest.

To one of these growls Harvey now deigned to reply, as he was trying to shake some blood into his left arm.

"You mustn't git discouraged, Colonel. Give me time. They is a heap sight more in gittin' the notes together right than I allowed fer. Why, this here arm feels like it had been sleepin' all summer. But I'll learn it if I has to work all winter. Don't git mad about it, Colonel. Let me have time—Irvig 'll help—he'll explain some pints that we ain't clear on, an' then I bet I can bring tears to your eyes agin."

It was with the intention of getting Irving to explain, and the added purpose of inquiring for mail, that Harvey pulled on his mackinaw jacket and started for the village. Every afternoon of his life he made this little excursion. It was seldom that the mail brought him anything, and what did come were stray patent medicine circulars, addressed to the wife whom a half hundred of these nostrums had failed to save. She was gone four years now, and still

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came these belated answers to her dying appeals. Harvey always took them home and read them and treasured them, for they came to him as messages from the dead, and they used to say in Six Stars that but for the persistency of the quacks he would have married again long since. Such was the news he was going to get as he trudged along the snow-clogged road with his fiddle under his arm. At the head of the hill, where the road turns and winds down to the village, he stopped abruptly and raised a hand to his ear. Away up the valley he heard it, very faint at first; now clearer and nearer; now full and strong, ringing along the ridge-top—a hound, giving tongue. Harvey knew that voice.

“Old Captain,” he said half aloud, as he stood drinking in the music. “Tom Lasher’s old Captain—there’s a dead rabbit!”

The bark of a rifle! Harvey Homer swings on his heels, and goes plunging on through the snow. He knows that voice. The best gun in the valley is singing along the ridges. Its song is reverberating from hill to hill, and now it is dying away in the woods up there toward

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home. Perhaps Colonel hears it as he mopes about the barn-yard, teasing chickens! Harvey Homer hears it as he goes to take a fiddle lesson!

As he strode down the hill, fleeing from the sight and sound of those forbidden pleasures, Harvey was hailed by a small boy. He would have hurried by had not the report of a revolver halted him.

Piney Kallaberger was peppering at a tin can on a fence-post.

"Mighty souls!" cried the man. "Can you hit anything with that there?"

"Can I?" replied the boy disdainfully. And the can rang as a bullet crashed through it.

"Shootin' mark ain't much fun, tho'," said Piney, falling in beside Harvey, and stepping along with him. "It's awful quiet around town now, an' when Irving goes away with the fiddle there's nothin' fer me to do. Fiddlin' is my speciality, when I can git a fiddle."

He cast a wistful glance at the one tucked under his companion's arm.

"Do you s'posin' I could hit a rabbit with that there revolver, Piney?" asked Harvey.

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“Does I s’posin’!” cried the boy. “I don’t s’posin’ at all. I know it.”

And he proceeded to demonstrate in words why the revolver was infinitely more accurate in its fire, easier to handle, safer to carry and more amusing to clean than the old-fashioned rifle. Harvey Homer was not so simple as to be carried away by the boy’s praise of his weapon, but the nearer he came to the village, the more humble he felt at being seen with a fiddle. It was positively effeminate. Before he reached the bridge by the blacksmith shop he was hiding his shame beneath his mackinaw jacket. By the time the mill was passed he had transferred it to the willing hands of Piney Kallaberger, and when he stepped into the store it was with head high and shoulders back, for, at least, he carried something that would shoot.

When the store door opened again it was to admit Aaron Kallaberger. The veteran seated himself in silence, laid the best gun in the valley across his knees, and, from some mysterious recess in the lining of his coat, drew a dead rabbit. This he dropped carelessly on the floor

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at his feet. Then he sighed and rubbed his right shoulder cautiously.

"Have you any first-class linnymment, Ned?" he asked, addressing the storekeeper, whose head appeared above the row of men on the bench by the counter.

There was a loud chuckle behind the stove.

"Now, did she kick you, Aaron?" cried Harvey Homer, leaning into view. "Ain't that a mighty knowin' gun? She never could put up with strangers."

Aaron winked at Ned Smith. He used the eye that was hidden from Harvey by his eagle's beak nose.

"It was this here 'ay," he said, not heeding the jibe. "I had snuck up along behint Laurel ridge, when old Captain—I'd borrowed the hound from Lasher—old Captain he brung the rabbit a-jumpin' along around by Jimpson's pond-field, an' I ups with the gun an'——"

"See here, Aaron," cried Harvey plaintively, breaking rudely into this vivid story of the hunt. "You'll spend all the money you has on linnymment if you keeps that there rifle. I know her temper. She'll kick you every chance

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she gits. Now, her an' me gits along as sweet as two lambs. S'posin' we swap."

"Oh, I ain't petickler," replied the veteran, "so long as I gits a good bargain. What 'll you give?"

Harvey held up the revolver.

"That," shouted Aaron, laughing derisively. "Why, this here is the best gun in the walley."

"You sayd yesterday it was too old," retorted Harvey.

"Too old!" cried the veteran. "Mighty! It's historical. Your grandpap carried it in the Revolution. That there ramrod alone what he whittled is a relict. Don't be childish, Harvey."

"It wouldn't be jest an even trade, I know," said Harvey timidly, "but I allow if I th'owed in a dollar——"

"An' a bottle of linnymment, it 'ud be fair," added Aaron.

Harvey Homer sat late that night, reading by candle-light. Suddenly he raised his eyes from the book and laughed.

"He got a bottle of linnymment, Colonel," he said. The dog had been napping by the stove,

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but now he lifted his head from between his forepaws and gazed at his master. "He'll need that an' the spring-bed, too." Harvey arose, and, stepping to the corner, laid one hand on the muzzle of the best gun in the valley. "We've got her back, Colonel, an' tomorrow we'll go huntin' agin, but somehow my brain don't seem jest right. Somehow we ain't got as much as we had yesterday—me an' you—an' I can't account for it. Figgers allus did mix me. The Good Book straightens out a heap of things in this world, Colonel, an' I've been readin' that. But it ain't no help. It warns a feller agin most everything. I tho't it might mention the Kallabergers. But it don't. I guess that was because it was wrote so long ago. But, I allow, if it was to be wrote over agin it 'ud mention 'em."

THE NATURAL-BORN PREACHER.

JOSEPH TUMBELL was a natural-born preacher. That was his way of putting it, and he was positive that he was right. Being thus divinely gifted, it was hard that he had never been called to minister to the people, for, as a candidate for this high honor, he had stood three times before the congregation in the old Mennonite meeting-house on the ridge-side, where the road runs across hills to the river.

“The lot is cast into the lap,” the Bishop had said, “but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.”

The young man believed that. But the firmer his conviction, the harder to bear was the sight of another, one of poor parts, of halting speech and a barren brain, taking from the table the book in which lay the white slip that lifted him from the ranks to leadership, that transformed him from a silent listener into an

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expounder of divine truths. That a gifted man like William Larker, or one so devout as Hermann Appel, should have been called to the ministry before him was just, but when Joseph thought of Adam Snauffer, and recalled his smug countenance—fat, rosy red and framed in rolls of shiny hair and a beard most fastidiously trimmed—when he remembered the little, restless, bulging eyes, that seemed to ferret out in an instant all the good points of a horse and the bad ones of a man, then deep down in his heart he was inclined to suspect that there had been some grave error in “the whole disposing thereof.” Perhaps not. There might be in Adam latent powers for good that would be developed now that he sat above the people with their ministers, but it had always seemed that he had laid up too many goods in this world to be giving much thought to the doubtful possessions of that to come.

Snauffer was a fine farmer. He was an excellent horse-trader. Yet to discover in him the elements of a forceful speaker required, indeed, a higher wisdom than Joseph’s, or even that of the venerable Bishop and his fel-

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lows. The lot had been cast, and it was not to be questioned, but man is weak and rebellious, and when he is a natural-born preacher, too, he must take it a bit hard to be compelled on six days of the week to work from dawn until dark in his fields, on a by-road, four miles from the turnpike, and then when Sunday comes sit silent in the congregation.

It was a day in early June. Joseph was working in his cornfield on the ridge-side, and long had been standing, leaning against the cultivator. He was at the end of the row. It was a fashion of his always to be at the end of the row. Even the store had noticed it and commented on it unfavorably, for they said that it showed in the corn. But a man cannot meditate when he is driving a blind sorrel mare and a fractious mule, and trying at the same time to steer a clumsy machine between two rows of delicate corn-stalks. Below him the valley lay, and a bustling place it was. A white line showed here and there against a green slope, marking the turnpike up and down which the great world hurried. There was the village, with the store, a vast and venerable

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structure, a centre of trade and thought, lifting its roof above the maples, and close beside it the mill, that groaned all day like a living thing. Beyond the sweep of rolling fields arose another ridge, fringed at its crest with a stretch of pine woods, and there, standing out sharply against the dark hill-side, was the Mennonite meeting-house, the hundred white gravestones that clustered about it now glittering in the noon sun. It was here that the young man's eyes were resting, and here, too, were his thoughts fixed, for to-morrow Adam Snauffer was to preach for the first time.

Joseph pictured it all in his mind. But when the minister arose before the great congregation, it was never Adam Snauffer who stood at the table, looking down at the people; it was Joseph Tumbell, called at last to the work for which he was so peculiarly fitted. How solemn the preacher looked! How deep and strong rang his voice, as he exhorted his hearers to heed his warnings, to follow his leading! He heard the groans of the old men. He saw the earnest faces of the sisters. The sisters! The multitude of them faded away, and one

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alone remained. The brethren were forgotten, and now he was preaching to her. She did not need his exhortation. Who could look into that serene face, framed in the white prayer-covering and a wealth of soft brown hair—who could look into those frank blue eyes and say she needed exhortation? He was preaching for her; that she might see him as more than the humble toiler of the ridges; that she might know him as one peculiarly gifted and called, therefore, to prophesy before the people. She would place his talents in the balance against the fat farm down there in the valley, against the brick house with the two front doors and the portico, against the full barn and smoke-house, with which Snauffer was seeking to win her. Snauffer? The very thought of the man dispelled all his dreams and brought him back to realities. If she wasted a glance on Joseph to-morrow it would be to see in him one not only inferior to Adam as regarded worldly possessions, but, judged by the lot, poorer in spiritual treasures.

Even now the fat figure uppermost in his mind was right before him, not in the pulpit

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of his fancy, but on the topmost rail of his own fence, complacently chewing a long piece of timothy and grinning.

"I seen you was talkin' to yourself, Joseph, so I 'lowed I wouldn't disturb you," he said.

"You did kind o' give me a start," growled the young man. "I was stedyin' a leetle, an' didn't know they was any one 'round."

"You have a repytation for stedyin' a heap," returned Adam pleasantly. "That's my weak pint—stedyin' an' medytatin'. I'm a stavin' worker 'hen they is somethin' to git a holt on, but 'hen it comes to shettin' me eyes an' grabbin' round for idees then I'm short."

"How are you goin' to preach?" inquired Joseph, with a supercilious toss of his head. "To be a preacher you'll have to have somethin' to say. To git somethin' to say, a man must medytate."

"That's it exactly. You couldn't 'a' put it better," returned Snauffer, not in the least disturbed by the other's contemptuous tones. "You see, I'm most pestered to death, fer tomorrow I starts in preachin', and to save my head I don't know what I'm goin' to say. All

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this week I've ben so busy gittin' out shingles from my woods I ain't had time to think. Last night I went to bed intendin' to lay late this mornin' an' stedy out some pints as I was dozin'. It was nearly five o'clock agin I got up, an' not an idee could I git my hands on to preach about."

Joseph became sympathetic. "Mighty souls!" he said, leaning on a wheel and adjusting himself to hear a long story of trouble from his visitor.

"A feller with your talents can be surprised," Adam went on, "but fer a plain man like me it comes hard to start. I spent the whole mornin' settin' on a chicken-coop in the orchard tryin' to medytate, an' not a thing would come outen my head but how many foot o' scantlin' an' shingles I could cut offen the chestnut flats. At last I tho't o' you, Joseph. You are gifted; you have a heap o' ideas. Now, s'posin' you uns was in my place, what 'ud you say?"

Joseph glanced at the blind sorrel mare, and from her to the fat figure of her former owner on the fence. He was very suspicious, and

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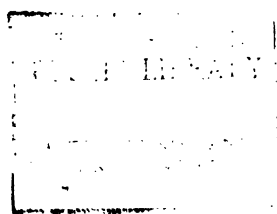
made no reply, save to nod his head knowingly and smile. Adam looked at the sorrel mare, too. He had smiled a year before, when he traded her for a good Durham cow and \$10 to boot. Now he was all solemnity, and a pious picture he made in his wide-brimmed hat and his brown coat, with its great tails spread over the rail at either side of him.

"Well, Joseph?" he said, after a long silence.

"I might want to use my sermon sometim', mebbe, myself," replied the young man bruskiy.

"I trust that in good time the lot will fall on you," cried Adam, with great earnestness. "It otter 'a' done it last week, but, fer some reason beyant me or you, I was called. An' fer some reason beyant me was I drawed up here this mornin'. You can teach me."

Joseph looked again at the blind sorrel mare, and from her to the form on the fence, and then to the little meeting-house on the other ridge. He could not stand before the people to-morrow and preach. Years might pass, or his life might pass, without the lot falling on him. It





Drawn by Howard Pyie.

“Humbility is the fountain of all wirtue.”

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was a poor substitute to have another utter his thoughts, but this was better than that they should never go beyond the confines of his fields and have no hearers but his dumb brutes.

"I have a sermon, Adam," he said at last, his tone becoming a little more genial. "I have a number of 'em, but I allus intended to begin with one about humbility."

"Humbility?" repeated Adam. "That is fine. Now, how'd you uns start if you was me?"

Joseph turned slowly, and, removing his hat, dropped it on the cultivator. Then he laid one hand solemnly on the handle as though it were the pulpit, and raising the other and shaking it at his only auditor, he cried, "Humbility is the fountain of all wirtue. Be humbility——"

"Hol' on," Adam interrupted. "Wait tell I git that. Humbility is the fountain of all wirtue. That's good."

"Be humbility in this world we becomes bigitive in the next," continued the preacher. "The more bigitive we are in this world, the more humbiller will be our placet in that to come."

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"Wait tell I catch that," pleaded Adam.

But Joseph went right on. "Oh, brethren, heed me warnin'! Mind how the prophet sayd pride goeth before the fall." He stopped suddenly and smiled. "That's the way I'd open up," he added.

"Pride goeth before the fall," repeated Adam. "That is grand—pride goeth before the fall; but say now, wouldn't autumn sound fancier?"

"That ain't what the prophet sayd," replied Joseph contemptuously. "It ain't what he meant nuther. But I allus intended to run in a figger like this—before the fall—that is to say, brethren, how as in our summer-time 'hen we are all covered with be'yutiful flowers, an' grass, an' wavin' fiel's, we are puffed up, but then comes the fall—that is jest a figger, mind ye, Adam—then comes the fall. All the be-yutiful flowers dies an' the leaves begins flyin' round, leavin' our limbs all bare an' cold. Then, brethren, we can puff up, but it won't warm us, an' we'll be most a'mighty glad for an humble hay-stack to crawl under. Do you catch the idee, Adam?"

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"It's grand," cried Adam. "It's a splendid beginnin'. But that ain't all, is it? I have to fill in at least ten minutes, but still I s'pose I can repeat."

"All?" exclaimed Joseph. "Mighty! Why, with a sub-ject like this here, it's hard to stop. There are some texts you'll preach on 'hen it 'll be best jest to keep repeatin', but on humility, never."

Adam was shaking his head dubiously.

"Well, now, mind me," said Joseph reassuringly. "Havin' begin, I'd go on an' tell the brethren how wicked I'd ben oncet myself, an' how big-feelin', an' how I become humble agin—humble as a leetle child."

"Most a'mighty impressin'," said Adam, wagging his head approvingly. "I'll certainly do that."

Joseph had forgotten him. "I had a buddy oncet," he droned, grasping the wheel with both hands, throwing back his head and closing his eyes as though he were groping his way about the dreadful past. "He was a wicked young man, brethren, an' I was a follower o' the darkness. They was nothin' wrong to be

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done in this walley that me an' my buddy didn't do. Oh, but we was wild!"

He did not go much into details. While he gave a few specific instances wherein he and his boon companion on the broad way had erred, these were engulfed in dreadful generalities. The wonder was that the quiet valley could have nourished so much evil. But Joseph's story so transformed it that where Pleasantville lifted her three spires heavenward; where the white stones glistened in the Mennonite burying-ground; where below him the mill lay snoring in the slumbering village; where to the south hovered a cloud of smoke, marking the only place in the whole pious country into which that great iron serpent, the railroad, had driven its ugly body, one might well have looked to see the walls of Sodom and Gomorrah, of Nineveh and Tyre. Joseph Tumbell and his buddy escaped the gallows. Thither they were bound, and thus alone could their career have been checked had not a wild night adventure intervened to save them. Just what occurred to drag them back to the narrow way, the preacher did not explain; but his free

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use of adjectives made it evident that it was one of those terrifying manifestations of physical power that come at times from the most unexpected quarters to cause mental upheaval.

"Oh, it was awful!" cried Joseph, closing his eyes again as though to shut out the recollection. "We was miles from home, an' the night was dark, an' the thunder an' lightnin' was a-rollin' an' a-flashin' around us. But it changed me an' me buddy then an' there. Wild as we was, we became humbiller than leetle children. We made a promise, providin' we ever got home. It was a promise that reginerated us, an' brought us back outen our dark ways. We never danced agin."

Having demonstrated his own humility and shown its cause, and having by the words he was uttering proven its fruits, Joseph opened his eyes and picked up his hat. Then he smiled.

Adam Snauffer said nothing, but got down from the fence and climbed into his buckboard. For several minutes he sat there, wiggling his whip pensively.

"It's grand," he said at last. "You cer-

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tainly have helped me a heap, an' it's done me good to hear you. If I can jest remember, it'll be fine: First, humility is the fountain of wirtue; secondly, pride goeth before the fall, and thirdly, how wicked I was. I allow I can holt it tell to-morrow."

He did remember with remarkable facility.

It was a fair day, and from every quarter of the valley the people had come to hear the new minister. The little white-walled meeting-house was crowded. Joseph tucked himself away in a corner, and had to crane his neck covertly to look over a score of hoary-headed brethren and see a certain white cap on the sisters' side. There were half a hundred of them, but he located this particular one, and by careful watching he could sometimes discover a break in that solemn wall of bearded men and through it get the briefest glimpse of the serene face and the mild blue eyes fixed so earnestly on the preachers. She did not see him, the humble toiler of the ridges. But Adam Snauffer was in the row of ministers, and one of the six great black hats hanging so gravely on the wall behind the pulpit was his.

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The Bishop was on his left hand, and on his right was the venerable William Larker. He was with the leaders, placed there by the lot that expressed the divine will. As compared to him, how small must Joseph Tumbell seem! Poor Joseph! A long-drawn nasal tone from an old brother on the front bench started the congregation swinging away into a hymn, but instead of sending his voice sounding above the others, as was his custom, he now went mumbling and stumbling through the buck-wheat notes. He got behind and sang a bar all alone at the close. When he recovered himself, it was to see Adam Snauffer standing at the table, awkwardly fumbling his Bible.

There was a silence in the room. The preacher shifted uneasily from one foot to the other several times. Then, in a voice hardly audible three benches away, he began: "As I set here to-day a few tho'ts are suggested to me." A long pause followed, broken by a loud "Amen" from a brother in the congregation. "These few tho'ts was suggested—humility is the fountain of all wirtue."

Adam dropped the book and folded his

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hands, as though he were waiting for his first shot to land before firing again.

“Be humbility——” He made another violent attack on the book, and looked at the ceiling. “Be humbility——”

He wavered. Joseph Tumbell, in his obscure corner, forgot self and leaned forward eagerly. Would Adam remember? Oh, if he could only help—if he could only shout it to him!

Adam did remember. His first fear was gone; his old assurance returned. As though by a sudden inspiration, he cried: “Be humbility we become bigitive in the next world.”

He stopped again, and again he folded his hands, but now it was with perfect composure. He showed it by smiling. To be able to stand on both feet before an audience and at the same time smile has always been a proof of oratorical equilibrium. So Adam’s next thought was put forth in an impressive, a deep and unctuous tone. “Another idee has been suggested as I set here on this be-yutiful day—pride goeth before the fall—mind ye’ brethren, before the fall—that’s a figger.”

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Now the sermon moved splendidly, and the thoughts came as fast as they were suggested. At times the preacher was a trifle mixed, and again and again he disregarded his instructor's injunction and repeated, believing, perhaps, that by many repetitions the idea might once be correctly expressed. Recovering the use of his voice, he got entire control of his hands, and the eyes, that at first sought the table or the ceiling, now looked squarely into those of his hearers.

At length he paused. His arms were lowered, his hands grasped the table, his head was thrown back, his eyes closed, and in a solemn voice he said: "I had a buddy oncet."

Joseph Tumbell was astounded. This was the first time he had ever heard of Adam possessing an intimate friend of any kind, for his close ways and horse trades had always made him rather unpopular in the valley. If he ever had a boon companion it had been kept very quiet, and the announcement now came as a surprise. But if this was unexpected, still more so was the bold declaration that Adam and his buddy were partners in wickedness.

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Joseph began to be angry, for he had expected that in following his suggestion Snauffer would supply a sketch of his own life, but it was quickly made evident that the sins he was fathering were not his at all. They belonged to Joseph Tumbell. There was a boastful ring in the preacher's voice, too, as he told how wicked he and his buddy had been. He even began to repeat. He was bemoaning the fact that in his young days he had been given to the vanity of fancy clothes, that he had played cards and even descended to dancing, yet he never referred to his recent bargain in trading off his blind sorrel. There were a hundred glaring omissions and commissions of a late date that he might well have mentioned, but instead he took Joseph's sins, multiplied them by three and claimed them as his own. Then followed the regeneration, for the Adam Snauffer the people saw before them was not the wild rake of years ago. He, too, had become "humbiller than a leetle child." The wayward, reckless youth and his buddy were miles from home on a stormy night, and the thunder was crashing around them, when an awful

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thing happened. They saw the error of their ways and made a vow to live aright henceforth. They never danced again.

Whatever might have been the feelings of his instructor, the new minister that day established a high reputation in the minds of the valley. As he shouldered his way down the crowded aisle at the end of the service, Joseph heard on every hand: "Preacher Snauffer is a wonderful talker."

Even Mary said it. He was unhitching her horse, being too much wrought up to linger about the door and gossip. He wanted to see her alone, and to speak to her, if only to make a remark about the weather, that under the spell of Snauffer's eloquence she might not forget the simple farmer of the ridges.

"Adam is a wonderful talker," she said as she climbed into her buckboard and gathered up the reins.

"Wonderful—wonderful," replied Joseph mechanically.

He stepped away from the fat horse's head, expecting that she would drive off. She did not.



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"Mebbe I might give you a lift," she said, looking away up the ridge, thus hiding her face from his by her bonnet.

"Mebbe you might," said he.

When he saw her face again they were a half mile down the road, and the meeting-house had disappeared behind the bend.

"Adam is a wonderful talker," she said, now looking frankly at the young man seated at her side.

Joseph was contemplating his left foot. It was swinging down beside the wheels. Wonderfully comforting it is when you are driving with a woman, to let one foot swing free of the wagon this way. It helps so in the long intervals between remarks to be occupied with something, for when one of your feet is likely at any moment to become tangled among revolving spokes you cannot be expected to keep a continual gabble. So Joseph simply nodded.

They were at the covered bridge, where the road turns and goes straight across the valley, when she spoke again.

"I had no idee Adam was so wicked," she said.

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Joseph forgot his foot. "Oh, that's nothin'," he cried. "He never done all them things. That was jest preachin'."

"If he'd only done half of 'em it 'ud 'a' ben too much," said she. "No man who has ben so wicked as that is safe."

"I never knowd nothin' agin him but smart horse tradin'," returned Joseph stoutly. "That ain't sin exactly."

Mary looked right at him.

"Joseph," she said, "don't you tell me that a man as has ben as bad as Adam Snauffer can ever git entirely over it. There ain't a thunder-storm goin' that'll scare him complete—it might all come back most any time."

Poor Joseph! These were his own precious sins she was talking about. The first feeling of elation that she should have turned against the sleek Snauffer was lost in the knowledge that the faults that had won Adam this condemnation were, after all, not the preacher's, but his own. If she knew, would she now be riding at his side? If the lot had fallen on him and he had arisen before her and descanted on the evil of his past, would she now be giving

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him a lift? The girl was gazing at him so frankly and trustfully that he turned his head, that his great hat-brim might interpose between them. He fastened his eyes on the swinging foot, now perilously near the wheel.

It was an age until she spoke again. They had passed the mill and were slowly climbing the long ridge hill.

"What was the awful thing that happened the night he was reginerated?" she demanded suddenly.

"He—he dished a wheel," answered Joseph ruefully.

"He done what?" she exclaimed.

"If the night he was tellin' of is the one I think, he dished a wheel," said he.

Mary tossed her head disdainfully and cried: "Dished a wheel! An' he says he was reginerated be dishin' a wheel!"

Joseph was silent. How different the plain truth sounded, stripped bare of its wordy covering of thunder and lightning, of storm and terror!

"It really does seem a leetle weak," he stammered.

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“I should ’low it was most a ’mighty weak,” said she. “He need never come to me an’ tell how awful wicked he was, an’ that be dishin’ a wheel he was saved.”

The girl looked away, hiding her face from him with her bonnet. There was a very long pause. Several times the fat horse almost stopped moving and turned his head inquiringly to discover why his mistress neither chirruped nor slapped him on the back with the reins.

“I wouldn’t mind him bein’ wicked so awful much,” she said at last, with a little sigh, “but I hate to see a man so soft.”

Joseph gave no answer until the top of the hill was reached. There he braced himself suddenly, and looked at her very hard and laughed.

“I ’low it was lucky I didn’t draw the lot,” he exclaimed.

“If you had I’d ’a’ took Adam Snauffer,” said she.

Oh, these maddening poke-bonnets that turn upward and downward and outward when you would have them point right at you!

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Joseph has planted his left foot squarely in the wagon now. For when you love a woman, and she loves you, and you know it and she knows it, it is foolish to watch your boots.

THE SNYDER COUNTY GOLD-STRIKE.

AS a man of honor Piney Cridle had but one way open to him, and that led past the worthies of the bench—past the stern figure of the storekeeper, past the tall rolls of oil-cloth standing sentinel-like at the counter's end, through the door, and out into the world. He followed it. But the world was cold that morning. Not a chicken had dared the blast that swept the village street, and on the valley's edge the mountains rose, dark and forbidding, capped by a gray cloud that bore a promise of sleet and hail. To those mountains he must go. His honor demanded it. But now that the door was open and the wind was clutching at his neck, he turned a moment from the way and looked back.

"I didn't think it o' you, Ned," he said. "You've sayd the word, though, an' I go, fer I'll never hang around a store where I can't have trust."

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“Don’t you know the theenometer says it’s freezin’?” shouted Lucien Killowill, as he turned up his coat collar and pushed along the bench to avoid the draft. “Hain’t you no better sense than to git insulted with the door open?”

“I didn’t think it o’ you, Ned,” said Piney again, not heeding the old man’s protests, though he obeyed the implied command, and was now standing with his hand on the knob, his back to the cold world and the dreary hills, his face to that bright, stove-lit circle from which he was banished.

Ned’s face softened. He unbent and leaned over the counter, strumming a tattoo with his pencil.

“I’m sorry, Piney,” he said; “but I ain’t in business fer love. Of course I’d like to be, well enough, but you know I can’t—so there’s the end of it.”

Lucien Killowill nodded his head approvingly.

“When a man gits the gold craze,” he began; “when he leaves home an’ friends, religion an’ country, an’ goes to Snyder County

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diggin' gold; when he tears asunder them ties that binds even the humbillest of us an'——"

He stopped suddenly and began to cough, for Piney was towering over him. On the young man's face there was a look half of amusement, half of disdain.

"I owe you an' yours nothin', Lucien," he said. "When I do you can wag your head an' leckter—not till then, mind you. This here is between Ned an' me—this is; an' if he won't give me no more trust till I settle a leetle matter of five dollars, that's his affair an' mine—ain't it, Ned?"

The storekeeper, having in mind Killowill's own account with him, readily admitted that it was, and this gracious acquiescence misled Piney.

"Do I understand, then," said the adventurer, "that now an' here you refuses to trust me for a poke of tobacco?"

"I do." Ned Smith's voice was very low. He seemed to have lost his courage, and for the moment to be on the point of relenting. "It ain't that I've anything agin you, Piney," he went on, pleading like a man in the

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wrong, "but it don't seem right to encourage you. Here you are lettin' your clearin' go to rack an' ruin, livin' over in the mountains, diggin' an' diggin' like a crazy man. It's gold—gold—gold! Every time you comes back you looks poorer an' peekiter. The weeds has choked your clearin'; Harmon Barefoot himself is feedin' your cow; Willie Calker's had to sing bass in the choir all winter—an' him only fourteen—all because you think you'll find a mine an' make yourself a for-tune."

Lucien Killowill wagged his head and beat the floor with his cane, thus expressing what he dared not with his voice. The worthies of the bench were with him to a man, and half a dozen heads rocked in unison with his. From that bench Solomon Holloberger arose slowly, with a dignity that became a preacher of the Word and the most eloquent speaker in the Dunker meeting for many miles around. He shuffled to the stove, and, wheeling about, faced the misguided man, who, now at bay, backed toward the door again, and leaned on one of the sentinel oil-cloth rolls.

"Gold is a deceiver," said the preacher, in

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measured tones. "The Good Book tells us that in many places, Piney Cridle. Don't you mind how it says 'Gold is a mocker'? Lay not up riches in this world, but put your faith in that to come. Oh, that I had your young years! Would I be wastin' 'em over in them Snyder County mountains, diggin' an' diggin', sellin' meself to Satan fer a mess o' pottage? Never! I'd spend them blessed years goin' from house to house, from walley to walley, workin' in the harvest, gatherin' in the brands from the burn-in'. You needn't laugh, Piney Cridle. The day'll come when you'll look back on this wery time; when, tossin' on your bed o' sufferin', with all your gold piled around you, you'll cry out, 'Oh, had I only minded Brother Holloberger's warnin'!' "

"It ain't so much that," broke in Ned Smith, in a dry, commercial tone. "I wasn't thinkin' so much about sellin' himself to Satan, perwidin' he got cash down. What bothers me is that there ain't no gold in Snyder County."

"How do you know?" demanded Piney.

"All the regular gold comes from Californy," cried Killowill. "All my life I've been

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hearin' about folks findin' gold in Pennsylvany, an', as fur as I know, nothin' has ever yet panned out."

"But why shouldn't there be gold in Snyder Country?" Piney was in a defiant mood, and he waved his forefinger at the group at the stove, and closed his jaw with a snap.

Lucien pushed himself into the obscurity offered by the broad form of Andrew Rickaback, and turned an appealing eye to Brother Holloberger. What the store needed was a man of science. Lacking that, it had to turn in its extremity to the theologian. Brother Solomon was not to be confounded. In truth, he always gloried in what he termed "tight pints," and, as compared to the problem of Jonah and the whale, which he had solved years ago, the question propounded by this wayward son of Six Stars was childlike.

"When Adam an' Eve was put out of the Garden of Eden, Piney Cridle," he said, "it was ordered that hencefor'a'd mankind should live be the sweat of their brow. Sech bein' the case, it ain't likely the Almighty would plant gold mines every here an' there, so as they'd be

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handy to git at. No, sir. Snyder County would 'a' spoiled the whole plan. Californy is about the hardest place to git to they is." The preacher paused a moment to let this point sink deep in the minds of his hearers. Then he added: "There's gold in Californy."

"That's the plainest I ever hear it put," cried Lucien Killowill, coming into view once more.

"Yes, it is pretty fair," said Piney, undisturbed. "How about the Californians though? I s'pose they has to work their way back to Pennsylvany to git their gold."

Preacher Holloberger's theology failed him for the moment, and, while he was searching the floor for an idea of any kind with which to meet this impious adversary, Ned Smith interrupted the discussion.

"It ain't so much whether there is gold there or not, Piney," he said. "Mebbe they is, but what are you comin' to, huntin' fer it? A year ago an' there wasn't a popularer man than you in all our walley. You never had much, to be sure, but you could git a livin' ouden that clearin' your pap left you. An' now look at you! Jest

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look at you! Mackinaw jacket as ain't fit fer a horse to wear; boots jest held together be the soles; hair so long that you might pass fer an Amishman; clearin' all overgrewed with briers; your wery cow picked offen the roads be Harmon Barefoot! S'posin' you does find a mine—is it worth it? Is it worth all them winter days over there in the mountain diggin' an' diggin' all alone? Is it worth all them lonely, shiverin' nights in the woods?"

"Is it worth it!" Piney cried. "Huh! is it worth it?" He turned to the door again and seized the knob. "You uns think I'm crazy, because I've got idees beyant a clearin'. Mebbe I'm wrong. Mebbe some day I'll come back an' clean away the briers, an' plant a crop between the stones agin, an' go on jest livin'. But mebbe some day I'll come back, an' I'll come in a side-bar buggy with a slick horse, an' I'll have a cady hat an' a Prince Albert instead of this coonskin and mackinaw. I'll buy five-cent se-gars instead of askin' tick on a poke o' tobacco. I'll have a house with a portico, an' hand paintin's, an' statues, an' a melodium. Mebbe all that 'll happen. Then you all

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will shake your heads an' say you allus knowd Piney Cridle was a slick one. You laugh now, an' preach at me. You otter wait."

So Piney Cridle went defiantly on his way. The sharp wind clutched at his throat; the door banged behind him, shutting him from the bright stove-lit circle; on the valley's edge before him arose the gloomy mountains, capped with the gray hail-cloud. His honor demanded it. He would never return to plant a crop amid the stones of his clearing, or to claim the cow that Harmon Barefoot had rescued from the roads. When he came again it would be in a side-bar buggy, and all Six Stars would do him homage. When he came again he would drive right to the gate of the Killowill home and carry off the daughter of the house under the very nose of her spiteful father. But Pet might be married then! Harmon Barefoot's rigging was hitched at the gate that very moment, and Piney paused on the bridge below the mill and leaned against the stone side-wall, while he inspected it. Even now the girl and Harmon might be peeking through the window laughing at him. When he came again she

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might be Mrs. Harmon Barefoot! Well enough! She would know, at least, what she had lost.

They say in Six Stars that that is the last picture they have of the old Piney Cridle—of the Piney Cridle the village had known since the days when he used to bring the eggs to the store from the clearing on the ridge-side; of the lanky fellow the village should have loved for his gentle strength, his shiftless charity and boundless humor. There he stood in the bitter wind, leaning over the bridge wall, gazing into the stream. That had been a curious habit of his, ever since he first toddled down from the clearing. A bit of tumbling water, a white cloud, a shadow on the mountain-side would hold his gaze for hours. Some in the village said that it was only the natural laziness of the Cridles, showing even to the fourth generation; some declared boldly that Piney was more than an ordinary man, and that when he studied the ripples in the stream or the castles in the clouds, he was seeing “beyond;” some had held their peace and tapped their foreheads and looked wise. Then Piney had shouldered his pick and gone forth to fight his way clear

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of the ridge-side patch, with its stones, its bri-ers and its weeds. Twice he had come back, each time looking more wan and unkempt, so that the wise ones could tap their foreheads more sharply and proclaim aloud in the store what they had always known. At that very moment they were doing it, and a merry time they were having in the cheer of the glowing stove, while he leaned over the bridge, watching the icy stream. Perhaps they were right; perhaps there was no gold in Snyder County; perhaps he was a fool, but he would come again to Six Stars. Piney smiled. Stretching himself to his full lank six feet two, he turned to the store for a last look. The corners of his mouth twitched just a trifle, and his eyes narrowed. He raised his fist to shake it in a laughing threat. He started. Pet Killowill was watching him, and he waved his hand to her instead. Then he took up the way once more.

That was the last they saw of the old Piney Cridle.

Winter came and passed. The last white patch of snow had melted into the freshening hill-sides; one enterprising hen was proudly

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showing her three bedraggled offspring the way about the village, while old man Killowill, sunning himself on the store porch, discussed the heavy mortality among the "airly chickens"; the gentle tap-tap-tap from the cobbler's shop across the way showed that Andrew Rickaback had opened his window at last, and was pounding in the pegs with a vigor new-born of the balmy April air. The village was awakened from its winter's sleep. It was rubbing its eyes and sitting up. Then Piney Cridle came to shake it rudely from its slumber. He came as old man Killowill was in the midst of his discourse on the store porch; as Andrew Rickaback was tap-tap-tapping to the time of an old war tune; as Solomon Holloberger sat in his kitchen, an open Bible across his knees, his eyes intently watching his young tomato plants sprouting from a starch-box, while two kittens hurdled to and fro across his feet. He came in a side-bar buggy.

Piney Cridle's mare was the finest Six Stars had ever seen. She was a long, slender trotter, with very thin legs, and her head was carried high in check, so that her nose kept poking

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gracefully ahead of her at every step. Boots guarding all her fetlocks gave a further hint of her value, though nothing more convincing of that was needed than the way she pawed the air when the buggy drew up before the store. Piney just nodded to Lucien Killowill and his cronies, waved a hand to Ned Smith, tossed reins about the whip and leaped to the road. After he had walked twice around the trotter, critically inspecting her, he led her to the long rail and hitched. Then, wonder of wonders! he came up the store steps, drawing off a yellow kid glove.

“Pleasant weather we are having,” he said cheerily. “I had hoped for a spell of rain about this time. Rain allus helps the farmers, doesn’t it?”

“It does,” said Lucien Killowill solemnly. “But see here, Piney——”

“Jest a moment, please.” Piney waved a gloved hand very politely, but still insistently. “I’ve some leetle business I want to settle first with Mr. Smith.” He drew forth a roll of bills and looked inquiringly at Ned. “Five, ten or twenty—I can’t recollect?”

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"Only four ninety-six," the storekeeper stammered. "See here, though, you needn't mind payin' it now. I never——"

"I insist," said Piney.

Ned was moving backward from the presence. Waving a note, Cridle followed him. After them, from the porch, into the store, hobbled old man Killowill and his cronies, Solomon Holloberger, breathless with running, bringing up the rear. "I insist," said Piney again, and he tossed the bill on the counter.

Ned took it and laid down four pennies in change, but Mr. Cridle's eyes were not strong enough to see coins of such small denomination. He deliberately turned his back on them, and, gathering up the tails of his Prince Albert, sat down on the only solid chair in the place.

"Mebbe you have some good se-gars," he said carelessly over his shoulder.

"I've a very fine two-fer," returned the storekeeper, rather apologetically.

"Come, come," said Mr. Cridle, laughing and waving his hands about the company, "do you s'pose I'm goin' to buy these gentlemen two-fers? I want five-cent se-gars."

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This demand was fairly thundered at poor Smith. He was now thoroughly intimidated, and lost no time in getting a step-ladder and climbing to his topmost shelf. Somewhere behind a wall of glass and crockery he found a box which he handed meekly to his arrogant customer.

"It's my treat, boys," said Piney, passing the cigars around. "I'm sorry they ain't better, as it's not often I've a chance to set you uns all up. There's a dollar, Smith. Take a se-gar yourself, an' I'll put four in me pocket—that makes an even eighty-five cents. Now, as I was sayin'——"

"So you've found a mine after all—well—well—well—but that is fine!" Solomon Holloberger had pushed to the front and was holding out both hands. "I congratulate you, Piney. You deserves it. You——"

"I guess I do," returned the young man, allowing the preacher to shake just two fingers. Then, by a sudden thought, he turned to the storekeeper. "Let the children have the change in mint-sticks," he said.

"Now, Piney, I'd an idee all the while that

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you knowd," said Lucien, lighting his cigar and taking one long, delicious puff. "There was somethin' about you all the time that give me the belief you had drumpt where the gold was. I'm right, now, ain't I?"

"I allow you ain't," replied Piney brusgly, tossing his cigar into the coal-scuttle, although it had hardly begun to burn, and lighting another complacently.

Killowill retired behind Andrew Rickaback. The cobbler was beaming all over, a condition rather unusual for him, as he is by nature a gloomy, taciturn man. Now he disclosed the cause of his joy.

"It seems to me that my tract in them Snyder County mountains joins right on to the one your pap left you, don't it, Piney?"

"It does," replied Cridle. "That's a fine tract, too. You otter look after it more."

This was a hint that rejoiced the cobbler's soul. He, too, was having visions of side-bar buggies, and trotting horses, and melodions.

"Ned, Ned," he cried in sudden excitement, "git Mr. Cridle one of them five-cent se-gars."

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Smith, being a man of sober judgment, hesitated, but the cobbler arose from the bench and shouted, "Can't you hear me—a five-cent se-gar for Mr. Cridle."

Piney accepted the attention politely.

"You otter look after your tract," he said. "An' you, Preacher Holloberger, haven't you a bit of property next mine in the north?"

Solomon whistled. It was a long, low wail-note, and when his breath failed him, he sank down on the bench and began to fan himself with his Dunker hat.

"I sold it to a saw-mill man last month," he gasped.

"I told you—I told you!" Lucien Killowill had never been a property-holder in the mountains, and what he suffered in hearing of Andrew Rickaback's great good luck had its balm in the absurd bargain of his intimate enemy, the preacher. "Jest last month I told you uns to hold on. I sayd all along you otter wait till you heard from Piney yander."

Solomon turned angrily on Cridle. "Why didn't you send me word?" he cried. "You might 'a' dropped me a postal."

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"Now, I'm sorry, Preacher, really I am." There was a touch of regret in the young man's voice. "Still, you know, I was mindin' your warnin'. Didn't you say gold was a mocker?"

"I sayd the Good Book sayd it," retorted Solomon.

"Well, then, that there was a mistake of mine, now wasn't it?" Piney appealed to the rest of the company to condemn him as he deserved; but the cigars had had a wonderful effect, and in all the long line on the counter there was not an accusing eye.

"It's terrible to cause others sufferin'," he went on; "but when you know I didn't mean it, when you know I miscal'lated what you was drivin' at, you won't be hard on me, will you, Preacher?"

"You otter 'a' sent me a postal," snapped Solomon.

Andrew Rickaback had made it evident by many sage winks where he stood in this controversy over Piney's inconsiderateness of others.

"It's only natural you wouldn't have time to think of them things," he declared softly.

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"By the way, though, how does the vein run? I should jedge that naturally it 'ud foller along the mountain, or mebbe it splits up in all directions. Am I right?"

"If I could tell you I would," was the reply. "There ain't nobody I'd rather tell it to than you, Andrew, if I could; but that's a pint I ain't follered out yit."

"Didn't your diggin' give you some idee of the general direction? Didn't it——"

To Lucien Killowill's mind the world was going entirely too smoothly with Piney Cridle. It was high time that there should be injected into the general chorus of adulation some little discordant note that would bring the young man to a sense of the hollowness of riches. Solomon Holloberger had been completely crushed and was sitting in silence, wiggling one foot very vigorously and chewing a match-stick, so in his gloomy mood he did not make an attractive butt for the old man's cutting humor. Andrew's high spirits were proof against any attack. Piney, in the glory of his derby and Prince Albert, tilted back on two legs of his chair carelessly twirling a fine cigar; Piney, in

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the full of that great white light the rich so love to have beat upon them, offered a very large mark for ammunition such as Killowill had stored in his narrow head.

"Mebbe you haven't heard about Pet," began the old man, blocking the cobbler's quest for information.

"About Pet?" Piney's chair came down on all four legs. "What about Pet?"

"She's likely to marry Harmon Barefoot," answered Lucien, rubbing his hands.

Piney swung back against the counter and took a long puff. "Is that all?" he drawled.

"Ain't it enough?" cried Killowill. "Why, they've been settin' up regular all winter, him and her. He's give her an accordine."

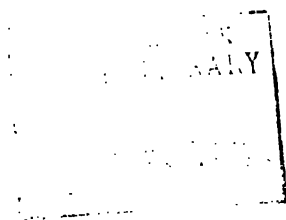
"I wish 'em happiness," said Piney cheerfully. "It's a pity she couldn't do better than Harmon Barefoot, though, fer she's a pretty girl, she is, an' there was a time when I might 'a' married her myself. But Harmon is one of them fellers that 'll never have nothin' unless it's willed to him."

This contemptuous reference to the son-in-law he was likely to have angered Killowill.



Drawn by Fletcher C. Ransome.

Solomon Holloberger had been completely crushed and was sitting in silence.



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He climbed to his feet and thumped the floor with his cane and tried to unburden his feelings in words. For the moment words would not come. In his anger he dropped his cigar and tramped on it, which served further to enrage him.

“See here, Piney Cridle,” he began.

Piney was on his feet.

“Take another se-gar,” he said, “an’ don’t git all het up, Lucien. I was only joshin’. Tell Harmon that when they’re married he can have my cow. Tell Pet I’ll send ’em a nice cut-glass water-pitcher—do you hear—tell her that. You might tell her I’d ’a’ called to-day only I was drivin’ through on my way to Pleasantville an’ stopped longer than I had otter—tell her that.” Piney pulled on one of the yellow gloves and lighted another cigar. “Tell her I hope she’ll marry Harmon,” he added.

With that he left them. From the side-bar buggy he waved the derby, held in a gloved hand. The glossy trotter swung into her stride, and in a moment scurried around the bend at the end of the village.

Hardly a week passed till Piney Cridle came

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again to Six Stars. He came in his old mack-inaw jacket and coonskin cap this time. He came afoot, and found Ned Smith alone in the store.

"Where's the boys?" he asked, tossing on the counter a large bundle wrapped in newspapers.

"Where's the cady an' the Prince Albert?" returned Ned, puzzled by the change in his old friend.

Piney tapped the bundle lovingly. "There," he answered. "Don't touch it. You'll wrinkle 'em."

"Where's your trotter?" demanded Ned.

"My trotter!" Piney laughed long and loud. "What made you think I owned a trottin' horse?"

"Well, if it wasn't you unsez whose was it?" cried Smith angrily.

Some minutes passed before Piney could speak. He sat down and rubbed his face in his coonskin cap, and rocked to and fro in his chair.

"That mare belonged to my boss," he said at last.

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Slowly the storekeeper backed out from his post behind the counter, until he stood menacingly over the gleeful Cridle.

"Your boss!" he exclaimed. "I thought you had a mine."

"Whoever sayd I had a mine?" Piney retorted. "You never heard me say I had a mine."

Ned thought a minute, and then shook his head very slowly.

"I mind now, you didn't," he admitted. "But the money an' the se-gars?"

"I worked all last winter in a saw-mill."

"Mighty souls!" With this heart-born exclamation Smith sat down on the bench and stared at his friend.

"Where's the boys?" demanded Piney. "Where's Lucien, an' Preacher Holloberger, an' all them?"

"Diggin' gold," was the solemn answer.

Piney drew a cigar from his pocket and lighted it. "This here's jest a plain penny one," he explained. "I've give up them expensive luxuries."

Smith's head was wagging ominously.

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"I s'pose they've gone to Snyder County," said Piney, after a long silence.

"Right," Ned answered. "They started the day after you was here—the whole of 'em. Andrew Rickaback had laid out to open up his property adjoinin' yours, an' Solomon, havin' sold his tract, started a general prospectin' firm with the idee of findin' a vein an' buyin' an' operatin' on shares."

"Who's in the firm?" inquired the other softly.

"They called it Holloberger, Killowill an' Barefoot."

"Poor fellers, poor fellers!" murmured Piney. He arose, and stepping to the door, took his post by the sentinel oil-cloth rolls. "Think of 'em, Ned; think of 'em—their clearin's choked up with weeds, their cows wanderin' loose around the roads. S'pose they does find a mine—is it worth it? Is it worth all them days of diggin' an' diggin'? Is it worth all them wet Aprile nights over in the mountains? Is it worth all the sorer an' the sufferin'? Is it worth it, I says?"

"You'd otter quit your joshin', Piney

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Cridle," cried Smith angrily; "you done it—you know you did."

"Ned," Piney answered, "you never was drove outen the store be scorn an' sermons, was you? You mind that day when they all laughed so at me? You uns thought I didn't feel it. You uns thought Piney Cridle was a poor simple-minded fool, didn't you? That's the way I felt myself, an' I stopped down there on the bridge to stedy it over. As I was stedyin' I happened to look up, an' there in the second-story winder was Pet Killowill a-peekin' at me. I knowd Harmon Barefoot was settin' in the kitchen. You otter 'a' seen Pet Killowill then as I seen her, a-lookin' my way so sorrowful. It was time I was up an' doin'. I'd rather have her than all the gold in Snyder County, says I, Ned. An' I took jest one long look, an' then I waved my hand an' set out for the mountain. All last winter, when you an' Lucien an' the Preacher pictured me a-diggin' an' diggin', I was gittin' a dollar a day in a saw-mill. Now I'm back agin. I come in a side-bar buggy, but it was my boss's, an' I was takin' it down to the big walley fer him. I come in a cady

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hat an' a Prince Al-bert because I bought 'em fer my weddin'. There they are now—in that bundle. Mebbe you wouldn't mind keepin' 'em fer me a while, till I run down an' see Pet. Poor girl! left all alone while her pap an' Harmon goes a-huntin' gold. Mebbe I'll run up to the clearin' an' open the house, an' then slip over to Barefoot's an' git my cow."

Piney turned to the door and went whistling out. At the steps he halted.

"Ned," he called back, "mebbe to-morrow you'll go with me to the mountains to gather in a few of them brands from the burnin'."

THE ADMIRABLE WHOOPLE.

IN all our valley there is no man so agreeable as Stacy Whoople, none so accomplished, none so versatile. One might be inclined to add, none so handsome; but the truth is the Pleasantville tailor has been more lavish in his gifts to Stacy than Nature in hers. Figure a bit too spare? Hair a trifle thin and dank? What are they when hidden beneath the graceful folds of a black Prince Albert and a dashing pearl fedora? In all our valley there is no voice so deep, so full, so big as his, and yet so soft; no fiddle that can sing like his from sunset to sunrise; no arm so strong at swinging corners; no feet so light at "chassey all." When a rifle barks just once on Gander Ridge and the dogs stop their baying, they say in the store, "Stacy's shootin'." When a light burns late in the window at the end of the village street, they say, "Stacy's sets late a-stedyin'." For Stacy is a scholar.

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The Admirable Whoople! Witness what the women of our valley say of him. It is written in black and white, in dots and dashes and curls in Miss Emily Hannaberry's note-book, that skeleton in our valley's closet, that repository of so much we would have left unsaid. Miss Hannaberry is a most estimable woman. But few of us would raise a voice against her, and for those few the inspiration would not be the good woman herself, but her ambition and her note-book. It was her ambition that led her to the study of stenography, so her note-book was her constant companion. Forth it came whenever two or three were gathered together, and speech ceased with us to be a vehicle for the conveyance of ideas from man to man; it became merely a means by which Miss Emily was to obtain practice in speed, in accuracy and in neatness. Now the women of our valley can not deny those thoughtless words regarding Stacy Whoople. That would reflect on Miss Hannaberry's accuracy and clearness. Witness them, then.

It was at a meeting of the Sisters of the Heathen, about a year ago, according to Miss

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Emily's record, and some months before the advent of Rhoda Bunting into the life of Six Stars, that there was raised in praise of Stacy Whoople every voice in our valley that would bring a tingle to the ears of a man in whose veins ran red blood. We skip that part of the Hannaberry notes bearing on the barrel of blankets and garments in course of packing for Africa, and we find that A. M. C. (meaning Annie May Carter) said, "He is certainly the tastiest dresser in the county." To this rejoins S. L. (presumably Sarah Larker), "It's a treat to hear him sing." More about Central Africa, and Martha Killowill exclaims, with much asperity, "He's entirely too good for her!" Who this inferior person was the record does not disclose, but we have here a hint that at this time Stacy was paying rather assiduous attention to some one. So Lizzie Bawkis thinks, for at the conclusion of her report on the famine in India we find her exclaiming, "It 'ud be a shame for such a pretty man as him to marry a girl as is naturally so plain." Some one declares that the mysterious "she" is an elegant housekeeper, but all women are thus divinely

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gifted, and a chorus of exclamation points, as Miss Emily describes the outburst, greets this assertion.

“To think,” cries A. M. C., “of her as was raised in Slender Gut even dreamin’ of movin’ into the finest house in town!” Impossible, indeed! “What would his ma say, was she alive, with such a dotter-in-law to handle all them fine old Whoople hairlooms?” Lizzie Bawkis exclaims.

But Mrs. Whoople’s long rest was never disturbed by such earthly calamities. The mysterious girl so disapproved by the Sisters of the Heathen was but one of Stacy’s passing fancies, as many of those very Sisters had been, and as they hoped to be again; for Stacy was fickle. Eminently fitted for love-making, he was preëminently unfit for matrimony. What wife will listen to a husband’s songs? The wail of the fiddle awakens the baby. Why train in the debate for the forum if one’s life-work is splitting wood for the kitchen fire? So Whoople was wary. We know, though, that the mysterious girl was not Rhoda Bunting, for it was months later that she came to our valley.

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It was Snyder County that gave us Rhoda. From that home of culture, the Airy Grove Musical Seminary, she came to us, to give lessons on the melodeon and the Killowills' piano. A trim little thing she was! I see her now, as she used to start out each morning, with her sailor hat tilted dashingly over that fine head of hair of burnished copper, shading as bright a pair of eyes as ever our valley has seen, shading a pair of dimpled cheeks whose roses even the wind and sun could not hide. A trim figure was hers, encased in a tight black jersey; and a masterful stride she had—a step full of spirit. Swinging her music-roll, she was off on the weary route of hers that led from valley's end to valley's end, sometimes circling the ridges, sometimes braving the mountains where the wooded solitude was broken by some soul's striving after art as it is in a melodeon. And sunset brought her home again, a bit jaded, perhaps, but trim still, and cheery.

Stacy Whoople, sitting on his porch one evening, noticed her as she trudged up the village street, homeward bound to the Killowills' where she had taken board. Of course he would

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never have given her another thought had she not come by the very next evening, at the very same minute, when the weather-cock on the Larkers' barn was ablaze in the evening sun. The third night he unconsciously turned his chair, turned his back on the square and all its interests, that his eyes might fetch the bend in the road. And when she went by he called a pleasant "good-evening" to her. He expected the girl to make an inaudible reply and hide her face from him by looking away. Instead she smiled, so cheerily that he half started from his chair. But he quickly recovered and let her pass. It was not long, though, till he went into the house and garbed himself in his Prince Albert.

Poor mice! Poor men! Poor Stacy Whoople! When, in a well-laid plan, you have spent a half hour getting your tie straight; when you have tallowed your boots until the dust speck seems like a great blotch; when you have soaped your hair down and brushed your coat till it shines like a dish-pan; when you have gently rapped on the door and heard a soft voice bid you enter—it is your right to find her alone.

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But if there must be another there, your right is to demand that he be a man—a man like yourself, all brushed and soaped and tallowed. To find her with the one boy in all the village you abominate; to find him gayly rattling music from a mouth-organ, with the girl so busy accompanying him on the Killowills' piano that she can only turn her head and smile at you—that is the unkindest cut. So it befell Stacy Whoople.

Rhoda Bunting smiled pleasantly. Her greeting was warm enough, but she pounded the keys with redoubled vigor.

Willie Calker paused a moment to catch his breath and knock the harmonica on the leg of his chair.

“Ho, Stace!” he said. Then he plunged into the music again.

The Admirable Whoople sat pigeon-foot a while, eying the tips of his boots. After an interminable time he eased himself by a swing to crow-foot, inspecting his heels. From crow-foot to pigeon-foot, from pigeon-foot back he went, till at last the music caught his feet, and the rumble of the floor sounded solemnly

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through the whine of the mouth-organ and the clatter of the piano. Rhoda heard it. With one last mad dash her fingers twiddled along the keys in the fashion most approved at Airy Grove, and she swung around on the stool and faced him.

"My, but it sounds nice!" he said.

"I'm glad you like it," the girl answered.

"Willie and me play regular."

The boy knocked his harmonica ominously on the chair-leg for a moment. Then, looking up, he crossed glances with Stacy Whoople so sharply that the fire flew.

"It would sound better without the mouth-organ," said Stacy boldly. "Harmonicas is meant for babies to cut their teeth on. When I come again I'll bring me fiddle."

"That would be lovely!" Rhoda pronounced each word with emphasis, and clasping her hands, leaned toward him, so that in the lamp-light the man could see her face, eager as it was with honest enthusiasm.

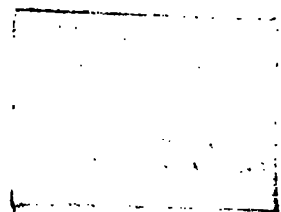
The harmonica was knocking ominously on the chair-leg.

"The mouth-organ would spoil it," declared



Illustration by F. H. Johnson, C. H. Johnson, 1911.

Carly's rattling music from a mouth-organ, with the girl busy accompanying him.



THE ADMIRABLE WHOOPLE

Stacy. "It's first-rate when you are fetchin' the cows home, but for an evenin' entertainment——" He shrugged his shoulders. He was talking to Rhoda Bunting, avoiding the boy's quiet eyes. He had never noticed Willie before except to kick him out of the way, and now more than ever there was need to ignore him. "As I was sayin', for an evenin' entertainment——"

Willie Calker was not to be ignored.

"It would be nice to have you play with us, Stace," he said, "if you could only do somethin' besides jigs."

"As I was sayin', for an evenin' entertainment," repeated Whoople a bit louder; "as I was sayin'——"

"Jigs are a common kind of music," Willie went on. "Now if you'd take a few lessons——"

"I started to say somethin' about an evenin' entertainment," cried the Admirable, striving vainly not to be ferocious, for that would have been an admission of the boy's existence.

"You might be able to join us in playin' 'There's only me and you in the wide, wide

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world,' ” said Willie. “S’posin’ we play ‘There’s only me an’ you,’ Rhoda, just to show him?’ ”

The boy straightened up in his chair, clasped the harmonica to his mouth, swelled his cheeks and swung away into the stirring strains. For Rhoda there was no choice. She could not talk above these resounding harmonies. She could not stare at Mr. Whoople, and it looked foolish to sit there watching her folded hands. Her fingers waved over the keys with that grace peculiar to the pupils of Airy Grove, and the Killowill piano sang out with the harmonica.

It was better thus, after all. The lamp at her side brought out her clear profile against the gloom, and Stacy Whoople, watching the white hands feathering to and fro, watching her lithe form swaying with the music, saw that she did not look at the keys nor at her flying fingers, but away off, at the ceiling, and he said to himself “It’s wonderful!”

Poor mice! Poor men! Poor Stacy Whoople! One night of such misery aroused his anger. The second awakened in him a dogged determination for a victory, even at the cost

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of his cherished freedom. The third broke his spirit; and when a man's spirit is broken this way he is in love. They say love makes us young again. It made a boy of the Admirable Whoople, and beside this sighing swain Willie Calker, with his harmonica and his great red tie, was a dashing man about the valley. Stacy felt the change too. On the fifth morning, when he wandered into the Calkers' garden, Willie was weeding the onion bed, kneeling at his feet, a mere mite that he could crush with one blow of his heavy boots. The lad smiled at him, and called him "Stace," not with effrontery, but by right; and Whoople bore it, for he knew that in reality he was the suppliant; that in that dream-garden where he would be wandering he was on his knees while the masterly boy towered over him.

"You mind what I told you last night," Stacy began.

"You mind what I told you," Willie retorted, turning over and propping himself up with his wide-spread hands.

"I said I'd give you five cents a night to stay away—that's all it's worth," cried the

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other. "The idee, anyhow, of my payin' you to keep away! You otter be kicked out."

"You dassent," returned the boy calmly. "You know you dassent, too. She thinks a heap of me and I think a heap of her. That's why it's worth ten cents for me to stay away at nights."

Stacy sat down on a tomato frame, and for a long time contemplated the twirling end of a blade of timothy he held in his hand. "You know it ain't right, Willie," he began more softly. "You ottent to sell yourself that way."

"Folks allus gets more for doin' what's wrong, don't they?" returned the boy.

"But s'posin' I told her on you," said Whoople, with a touch of defiance.

"Yes, s'posin'," retorted Willie. "She'd like to know that you was payin' me ten cents an evenin' so you could set up with her, wouldn't she? You'd better s'posin' somethin' else." The boy arose and stood before his rival. "You offered me a nickel, Stace Whoople," he went on. "You otter be ashamed of yourself. It ain't right, as you say, so I wants a dime, for it ain't often I've a chance

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to play duets with anybody as was educated in a regular cemetery. Besides, I think a heap of Rhoda Bunting and she thinks a heap of me. She isn't so old and I'm not so young but what she might wait. I'm fourteen. When I'm twenty she'll be thirty, and there was young Elmer Barefoot, he was only twenty when he married that rich Widow Hockewout from Kishikoquillas. Then Theodore Spangle's wife is fifteen year older than him, and if I——"

"Hold on," cried Stacy, reaching out desperately and seizing the boy's hand—for Willie was slowly retreating from him. "Hold on! You mind what you sayd last night—you sayd it with fingers criss-crossed. Well, here's a dollar—ten evenin's, mind you——"

"I don't want——" Willie was struggling to protest.

He was too late. He stood there alone, contemplating a great silver coin, and Whoople had fled.

"Stace—Stace!" The boy ran to the gate and looked up the road, but there was no sign of his rival.

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A bright silver dollar is a very fine thing to have when you are only fourteen. But when you are fourteen and love a woman; when you have a bright red tie and a harmonica; when the woman you love can play the Killowills' piano, it is dreadful to stand alone in the darkness, peering through the window into the cheerful room where she sits, and to know that you have sold your right to be with her. The dollar burned in Willie's hand that night. Once he thought of hurling it away, into the mill-race. That was when she looked up from her playing and smiled at Stacy Whoople, and Stacy smiled back and swept the bow slowly across the strings so that they wailed softly. And how she played! The Killowills' piano had caught the fiddle's mood. Willie knew that. In the outer darkness he could not hear one note, but there by the window he could see her swaying to and fro; he could see the white hands flashing; he could see her face upturned in the lamp-light halo as she watched the ceiling dreamily. At her side Stacy stood. He, too, was learning to play without watching the strings. His eyes were on her face, and, as he swung the bow, he

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smiled. Sometimes she would look to him, and Willie could see their glances cross and the fire fly. Then it was that the dollar burned in his hand; but a dollar is not a thing to be lightly thrown away. To save it he hurried to his old retreat behind the mill, where, seated on the bank, he could contemplate the black waters of the dam.

All the solace of tobacco, all the soothing of the weed, a boy has in a grassy bank, a stretch of water and a few pebbles. But when it is dark and you vent your anger in a wild swing of the arms—then there is silence—then that solemn splash out there in the blackness—that is better. Thus you hurl the devils from you. Thus you drown them out there in the inky sea. Then your arm gets sore, and your shoulder cramps—and peace comes to you.

So it was with Willie Calker. After he had sat a great while contemplating the wide reaches of that sea of his—the only sea he had ever known—he inserted two fingers in his mouth and whistled long and low. He did not have to rub a lamp or an ancient brass ring. His was a simpler mode of summoning his genii.

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Out of the pale glow of the square, Irving Killowill came slinking to him.

Willie pointed to the water. "Irving," he said, "does you mind the last time I soused you?"

The littler boy just chattered.

"Well, I 'm glad you recollect," said the master calmly.

Irving chattered louder and beat his legs aimlessly with his hands.

"I'm not goin' to souse you now," Willie went on sternly, "but I just wanted to give you warning."

"Oh, thanks!" cried young Killowill; "I tho't mebbe——"

"Don't think," commanded Willie. "I don't want you to think. Can you play the jews-harp?"

"I can play the 'Devil's Dream,'" replied Irving, with a ring of pride in his voice.

"That's the only jews-harp tune they is," returned his master. "That 'll do. Can you keep up with the pianner and the fiddle?"

"It depends how fast they go," Irving answered.

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"Do you mind the last time I soused you?" Willie pointed again to the black water.

"I guess I can keep up," faltered little Killowill.

"And do you want to earn five cents an evenin', easy work, steady job for nine evenin's?"

"Is there any danger?" asked Irving. To his mind such a prize was only to be won at some great risk, by daring life and limb. The thought of it stirred him. His fear of his master was gone now, in the prospect of the fortune, and he laid a hand on the other's shoulder and shook him. "Honest now," he cried, "ain't you foolin'?"

Willie stood up and for a moment gazed across the flat to the Killowill house, where the light was winking at him from the window. Then he turned to the boy, and, seizing him by the arm, pointed to the water.

"Honest," he said solemnly. "And mind how you was soused the last time, that time you forgot to put the m'lasses in Martin Holmes's boots."

Irving Killowill minded the last time he was soused. He did the will of his master. Whether

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it was more from fear than the love of gain, I do not know; but he did it well, and on the fourth day Stacy Whoople strolled into the Calkers' garden. He seated himself on a tomato frame, and for a long time silently watched Willie weeding the onion bed.

"How's the duets comin' along?" asked the boy, turning over and propping himself up with his wide-stretched arms.

Whoople evaded the question. "I believe you have some infloonce with Irving Killowill," he said.

"Mebbe you might call it infloonce," Willie answered. "He's smaller than me."

"He's smaller than me, too," returned Stacy, smiling grimly, "yet I haven't any infloonce. That's why I come to you. I'd rather have you a hundred times, with your old mouth-organ, than him, a-joinin' in with 'The Devil's Dream' every time me and Rhoda gets started on a duet. What can I do? It's his pa's house, and Rhoda, she's only a boarder." Stacy's voice was rising in wrath. "Sometimes I feel like I could kill him if only he was my size. Last night I was desperate. I went clear outen my head, I did,

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and I picked him up and dropped him out the window. It wasn't a minute till he was back agin, yang-yang-yangin' away at 'The Devil's Dream.' "

"Didn't Irving say nothin'?" inquired Willie, getting interested.

"He sayd somethin' about not bein' so bad as a sousin'," replied Stacy gloomily. "I'm desperate, Willie—really, so I come to you. Me and you was allus friends, now, wasn't we? You have infloonce. Couldn't you keep him away? For just one night, Willie, just the one night?"

"It might cost somethin'," the boy answered, after some meditation. "Infloonce is expensive. Folks allus pays for it. Now, if I had the money I might get Irving to walk down to East Harmons ville with me this evenin' to buy a plate of ice-crim."

"I'll give you a dime," said Stacy eagerly.

"But how about me?" the boy retorted. "Can't I have a plate? Isn't it worth somethin' to walk three miles and back—with Irving Killowill, too? About fifty cents 'ud really be right?"

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Stacy protested. Willie was firm. Stacy considered, eying intently the blade of timothy that he twirled in his fingers all the while. He hated to be mulcted, but he loved the girl. He felt toward her as he had never felt toward any other woman in the valley. For her he was ready to give up his freedom; all he wanted was the opportunity. To pay for that opportunity seemed against all tradition, but he was in the boy's power. And where in all the world is the man who, when he loves a woman and seeks to tell her that he loves her, will let the paltry matter of expenses stand between him and the realization of his hopes? The Admirable Whoople was not that man.

Stacy had forgotten the loss of his money by evening, when at last he faced his opportunity and stood with one hand on the Killowills' gate-post, watching the light in the room. She was there. Of course she was there, and Willie Calker and the obstreperous Irving must be well on the road to East Harmons ville. The way was clear. But he paused. At a crisis like this, when a man stands face to face with his opportunity, it is best not to rush in thoughtlessly.

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One is apt to be incoherent in his ardor. Calmness is what is needed. So Stacy turned a moment from the light and walked slowly up the road to the school-house and back, thinking it all over—how, when they had played “There’s only me and you in the wide, wide world,” he was to draw her gently to the settee and tell her. He reached out into the night and gathered in an armful of darkness, when he came to that point. “There’s only me and you, Rhoda,” he was to say, “and the Willie Calkers and the Irving Killowills is just the same now as though they never was at all.” Then she would say nothing. Such are times when women shouldn’t talk. Stacy had reached that conclusion when he drew up at the gate again.

The light was out. The house was dark. This was no time to delay. His knock on the door was firm and masterful, but it brought no answer. He pounded. Above him a window was opened, and, looking up, he saw, in the light of the rising moon, the venerable head of Elmer Killowill.

“Who’s that a-knockin’ down below there?” shouted the old man.

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"It's me," Stacy answered. "I've come to set up with Rhoda Bunting."

There was a gentle cackle above. Whoople's heart fell. Then little Irving Killowill's head showed at the window beside that of his father.

"Ain't you heard?" called the old man. "Didn't Willie tell you?"

"Tell me what?" Stacy's voice faltered.

Old Killowill did not hear him; but it made no difference, for he shouted, "Her young man come from Snyder County to-day an' she's gone home to be married."

So Rhoda Bunting left us. So the Killowill piano is silent, and Stacy Whoople sits moodily on his porch, watching the turn of the road where he first saw her. He is free still, and there is much about him in the stenographic reports of the Sisters of the Heathen. We find mention of him in Miss Hannaberry's account of the last meeting, but of more vital interest is her quotation of Mrs. Calker.

"Speakin' of my Willie," says the widow, "have you seen his lovely mouth-organ with a bell on the end? He just got it from the city,

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an' he plays it all the time; but he ain't the same as he used to be. He's snappy like, an' don't eat, an' kind o' moons around. If he was older I'd think he was in love, but bein' as he is so young, I guess it's in-di-gestion."

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IT'S been gittin' lonesomer and lonesomer up here on the hill, Colonel," said Harvey Homer to his hound. He was standing before a bit of cracked mirror trying to twist his collar on, and in spite of the plaint in his words, his tone was lithesome, and he smiled as he looked down at his companion. Colonel, of course, said nothing in reply, only beat his tail upon the floor.

"How do you figger she'll like me now?" Harvey laughed. "I allow I'm pretty well slicked up. My bow's tasty, ain't it?" He laid his great hand across his tie to make sure that it was straight. "Kitty Holmes is wery particular, Colonel, and big-feelin'. The Holmeses is the best family in the walley; but, after all, it ain't blood that counts nowadays. If it was blood she was lookin' for, she might take Preacher Spink's boy; but even if the Homers ain't as ayristocratic as the Spinks, I've sixty

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acres and a tight house, though it is a mile from town."

The hound again beat the floor with his tail to show that he agreed thoroughly.

"Mind me, now," the man went on, squeezing himself into his Prince Albert. "It had ought to be let out, Colonel. I really think I ought to marry agin just to git this coat let out. Why, it won't button no more, even; but I can th'ow it back careless like, as if that was the way it was wore. How's that, Colonel?"

The hound seemed to think that no one would notice the tightness of the garment, for he showed his teeth and smiled.

"Now we're off," the master said, pulling his cap over his ears. "It's pretty sharp out, old boy, but I don't want to spoil the effect with that torn overcoat of mine. Weemen is queer, Colonel; weemen is queer. They allus pre-fers a cold dude to a man that's ragged and warm."

So Harvey Homer went out into the bitter winter afternoon, and, with his dog at his heels, walked blithely toward the village. He was not an egotist. He had not even made his conquest as yet, nor was he altogether sure of success.

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His happiness was of another source. His whistling had a deeper note. He was stepping out of five lonely years into a bright life again. The door had closed upon the past, shutting from him the memories of days over which he had long been brooding, and the future was holding out to him many promises. The future in concrete lay before him. It was there in the village at the foot of the slope; it was there in the yellow house by the church where Kitty Holmes was waiting. That Kitty was waiting he had no doubt. He had not specifically informed her that he was coming, but he had called on her yesterday and the day before, and still the day before that. Indeed, her uncle Martin had twitted him about it at the store, and if the ancients there expected another visit, surely she could not be blind.

At the crest of the hill Harvey turned for a glance at his own distant home, its fresh coat of paint glistening in the afternoon sun. From down there in the village she could not see it, but he seemed to feel her in the spirit at his side admiring it. For one it was a lonely place. For two it would be a snug spot. Perhaps she

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would think it a bit small, the Holmeses had always had so much, and she might find three rooms a trifle cramped, but he was planning an addition toward the barn, and perhaps a summer kitchen by the milk-house.

“It will be fine with that extension, now won’t it, Colonel?” he said. “We’ll have to make it two stories, with a room overhead for the hired girl—she’ll have to have a hired girl; the Holmeses allus had a hired girl.”

The hound agreed thoroughly, licking the hand held out to him and wagging his tail vociferously.

The world was going well with Harvey Homer. He went swinging on, whistling more gayly than ever, his coat flaring open wide, his broad chest defying the bitter wind. The very thought of a hired girl seemed to have added to his stature. A few years ago it would have been a dream. To-morrow it might be a reality. A few years ago—that was before the long, dark time; that was when Martha was living; that was before the lonesome time. He stopped whistling. He shortened his steps. He buttoned his coat against the wind.

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In those other happy days of his, their ideas had been strangely simple. They had found three rooms ample for their way of living. True, they had planned some time to have a summer kitchen, but that was away off in the future, when they should be rich, and of riches the stony farm held little promise. Of a hired girl they had never dared to dream. The blissful state of Nirvana were as easy to attain. Strange it was, too, how contented they had been, though so narrow. Then the angels had come and taken her. Strange it was that they should pass the village by and visit the lonest house in all the valley, and take, of all its people, the one who would be most missed. So she had left him to work in solitude and desperation. Work was all of life that remained, it seemed, and it had added a fat meadow to his acres and turned the timber in his woods to bank deposits. What had been her dreams he had won, but for another. To that other he was going now to lay the prizes at her feet. He had never gone for Martha. He had never put on fine raiment for her. They had known each other too well for that. Born

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on neighboring clearings, they had grown up together, and he could not remember the time when she had not been a part of his life. A day came, of course, as naturally as comes a birthday or a Christmas, when they went together before a preacher, and she moved to his home.

Harvey was standing still in the road. For that moment there only was one woman. He turned and slowly retraced his steps till the house was in view again, bringing with it a clearer memory—not of the days when she was there, but of the days just gone, through which he had been plodding, with only Colonel at his side, of the long evenings when he had spelled his lonely way through the mysteries of the Good Book. This was the lonesome time. To this he was returning. This was the past to which he would close the way, the memory from which he was fleeing. So he wheeled again, and with face set and quickened steps went down the hill.

In all his life Harvey Homer had not received a dozen letters, and the county paper only came once a week. But every day, the

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year round, however wild the weather, he presented himself at the glass-fronted case at the end of the store counter and inquired for his "news." It had become a habit with him. It was a solemn service. Thus he asserted his intellectuality. In his bold inquiry he was partaking of the blessing of a free government which gives to every citizen, great and small, the right to ask for mail. This custom of his now wrought for him much evil, for by the time he reached Six Stars he was intent upon his purpose; he was remembering only the lonesome years, and was reaching out for life again. Then that time-embedded habit turned him from the way for just one moment, though he could have named no one in all the world who would likely write to him.

There was a letter for him, and it came not as from one on earth. His solemn inquiry brought through the little window a printed envelope, addressed to Mrs. Harvey Homer, and when he saw it he sank down on the bench and sat there staring at it vacantly. The past had returned. He could not shut it out. It had been awakened

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by this letter of a quack, a belated answer to his dying wife's widespread and vain appeal for healing. There had been a time when he had cherished these strange missives. Then they had come more often, and he had fancied that in them he saw her hand. They gave him a sense of her nearness, and the transition was slight from seeing in these letters from a land as far off and mysterious as heaven itself, not messages for her, but from her to him, mute reminders that she had lived and would not be forgotten. He did not even open it. The envelope alone apprised him of its real contents, so he just sat fumbling it.

"I thought they'd quit comin' a year ago," he said to himself. "It do seem like she's wrote agin. I s'pose it's really jest an accident, but it's curious how it come to-day. It do seem like a warnin'. It do seem like them doctors was instruments in her hands to keep me from forgettin' what I hadn't otter."

"I s'pose, Harvey," said Martin Holmes, speaking in his most insinuating tones from his seat by the stove—"I s'pose you're on your

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way to set up with Kitty. She was tellin' me how as she was expectin' you."

"I hadn't thought of it," was the other's answer. "Mebbe I will and mebbe I won't. That wasn't what I come for, anyway."

He sauntered out with all the nonchalance he could assume, turning homeward with head bowed and lagging steps. At the bridge he paused, to rest there on the railing and watch the water playing through the rifts in the ice. For that moment his mind was fully made up that he must go back into the old home and the old time to end a life with only dogs and memories for company. The letter fixed that. He held it in his hand, still unopened, for he knew its contents. He had read enough of its kind to know that it guaranteed a cure with one dozen bottles, and offered a trial bottle free on receipt of fifty cents in postage-stamps. That was the apparent message, but not the one conveyed to him. All it meant to him was that she would not be forgotten.

The gray of the winter afternoon was creeping over the valley. Snow clouds had overcast the sky, and his hill was in their shadow. Bleak

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it looked up there on the ridges, but he must go back to it. He started. Then he paused for a last look up the village street to the yellow house. He fancied he saw a girl's face at the window. It was pure fancy, perhaps, but he turned about and watched intently. Suddenly he hurled the letter from him. The brisk wind caught it and swept it over the bridge; the water caught it and whisked it away. There was no going back now. She must have seen him do it. She must understand. To her the message was returning, by the stream to the river, by the river to the sea and the unknown. She must forgive him.

So Harvey Homer hurried into life again.

"Why, this is a surprise!" said Kitty Holmes, though she had been sitting through the long afternoon waiting for him.

Harvey had thought to take her by storm, but in her presence all his courage fled from him, as it so often does with men in like case. A moment since a bold, determined fellow, now he was shyly sidling to a chair.

"It looks for snow," he said, after a moment of embarrassed silence.

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"It does," said she, "and it beats all how it will keep cloudin' over every day, and blowin' up, and, after all, nothin' happens."

For a very long time they discussed that most interesting of all topics—the weather. They reviewed the conditions of the week past, and compared them with the conditions of the same week in the preceding year. They touched the effect on crops and live-stock in the valley. They prophesied for the months to come, expressing their hopes and fears with as much gravity as if it made some difference to them whether it blew hot or cold. It was engrossing. Of course Harvey knew that all this talk meant nothing, but it kept him with her, and she looked so plump and rosy, so full of life and jollity, that he wanted to stretch out his arms and gather her in, but he dared not. He had still to scale the great wall of convention that divides man from woman, and he feared to make the leap lest he fall. He planned to go up gently and surely.

"I'm figgerin' on an extension to my house," he began, with a slight tremble in his voice, after the long pause that marked the exhaustion

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of the weather. "Now, where do you think it ought to be?"

"Is it for a settin'-room?" Kitty asked.

"A parlor," said he nonchalantly. He almost feared to overwhelm her. "I thought I'd ought to have a parlor, and I allow I'll buy me a full set of furniture."

"In-deed!" cried Kitty, surprised but still not overwhelmed. "A parlor—then you must put it toward the road, so folks can see it."

"I hadn't thought of that," said Harvey; "I was goin' to run it toward the barn, thinkin' I'd put on a second story for the hired girl, and she could hear at nights if there was trouble in the stable."

"A hired girl?" cried Kitty. "In-deed! Why, Harvey, you must be thinkin' of gettin' married!"

Now, had Harvey admitted his intentions then and there, he might have seen the end of all his troubles; but, as men so often do when women would lead them gently, he lost his courage for the moment; his tongue balked, though his heart and head would have followed her.

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"Oh, no," he stammered. But he began to shift about in his chair so uneasily that Kitty knew better, and she had no mind to let him back away.

"You needn't tell me you ain't takin' notice somewhere," she said softly. "You ain't thinkin' of buildin' a parlor and gettin' a full set of furniture for a hired girl, Harvey?"

Now he was wondering if she could be blind. Had all his visits been so unavailing? Did she believe some other woman was in his mind? The thought for the moment stunned him, and he stared mutely at her.

She was looking at the floor. That was better.

"You're gettin' lonesome, ain't you, Harvey?" she said gently.

Now heart and head and tongue went wild together. Now he understood her and she understood him. Courage came.

"Yes, Kitty," he said. "I'm lonesome. It's nice up there on the hill for two, but for just the one it's awful. A dog's company, but it ain't human. The Good Book's consolin', but readin' is wearin'. It's when dark has come you

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feel it most; when the wind's a-whistlin' and even Colonel's gone to sleep, so there's nothin' to do but set and think. And I've thought 'most everything there is, and it gits tiresome thinkin' it all over agin—over and over. But, now, Kitty——”

The door opened. The cold blast checked him, and he turned. Irving Killowill stood before him, holding out a letter.

“It's for you, Harvey,” panted the boy. “It come floatin' down the creek as I was huntin' mus'rats, and I thought I had better fetch it to you.”

It was her letter. He could not escape it. She would not let him forget her.

“You done right, Irving,” the man said, taking the envelope and putting it in his pocket, dripping though it was. “You done right. Next time I see you I'll give you a penny. Don't forget to remind me.”

“I won't,” the boy cried, closing the door behind him with a bang, and speeding away to his hunting.

“He done right, Kitty,” Harvey said.

He seemed to think she understood him. He

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had scaled the wall. She was standing there before him, just waiting, but the man was looking over and beyond her.

“As I was sayin’, it’s mighty lonesome up on the hill,” he went on. “Sometimes I think I’d like to catch somethin’—somethin’ that’s real fatal.—But I’ve stayed longer than I laid out to, for I must git home and do the feedin’. Good-afternoon.”

“You needn’t be so lonesome,” the girl cried, looking up.

The door was half closed on him, and he pretended not to hear. A moment later he was hurrying by the store, and Martin Holmes, at the window, saw him.

“Somethin’s the matter with Harvey, boys,” the old man said. “He’s lookin’ mighty peekit-like. I think he wants to marry Kitty, and all he has to do is to ast. Yet he don’t. I allow she’d take him quick. The Holmeses is the best family in the walley, and it ’d be a comedown for one of ’em to marry a Homer, who, even when they was in Turkey Walley, wasn’t first-class. But weemen can’t be choosers. Somethin’s holdin’ him back. It must be them paytent

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medicine circulars agin. They'll drive him to the grave, boys, and had ought to be stopped. The government shouldn't allow it, I says, and I don't think the government would if it knowd."

The government never knew. Law-bound, it would have been heartless, anyway, and continue performing its mail-carrying functions, despite the unhappiness it might cause. So the store thought, for it pondered much over Harvey Homer's case that winter, his very absence keeping him in mind. Once a week he came to get his county paper, but he always hurried away. Occasionally his rifle could be heard barking along the ridges, and sometimes Colonel would run a rabbit through the village yards. Harvey was back in his old life, brooding again, and thinking the old thoughts over and over.

"It's curious how quiet she has kep' lately, Colonel," he said one evening, looking up from the Good Book. It was one of those silent evenings when there was no wind even to keep him company, for the snow was falling heavily. "It's three months now since we've got any

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mail at all. She seems to be forgettin'. That must be a pretty place, jedgin' from what the Good Book says there in Revelations, but it's kind o' full of animals, and she was never much on animals. But I s'pose she's gittin' used to it, and ain't mindin' about me so much. There must be lots of her folks there, Colonel, and mebbe she sees how lonesome we are, and thinks we might go on with the extension and all them plans. It seems to me if she didn't like it she had ought to wrote."

It was curious. Days went by; weeks passed; no letters came, and Harvey began to brighten. He resumed his daily trips to the village, arriving there on the minute with the stage, and anxiously watching the distribution of the mail. The county paper was the only answer to his formal inquiry.

"She must be forgettin' me," he would say to himself, and he would smile softly.

Then, on a warm day in early spring, when the store doors were open wide for the first time in the year, and the worthies were on the bench again, basking in the sunshine, they saw him go by whistling. The old Prince Albert,

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flaring open, was adorned with a geranium on the lapel, matching in brilliancy his new tie. He stopped as by a sudden thought and called back to them:

“Is the stage in yit?”

“Yes,” said Martin Holmes, looking at the ceiling. “But there’s no news fer you. I minded that petickler.”

Harvey hurried on, whistling louder.

“I was speakin’ last fall about my bein’ so lonesome up there on the hill, Kitty,” he began, as if there never had been any weather.

She had stepped behind him and quietly shot the bolt, and then stood very, very near him.

“Well, I’ve got the lumber for the extension,” he went on, “and as you suggested it, I’m kind o’ thinkin’ of gittin’ married. Now, who does you guess I’m——”

There was a loud knocking at the door.

“Go on, Harvey,” Kitty said. But he had dropped feebly into a chair.

“It mowt be Irving Killowill,” he cried.

“You was sayin’ you was so lonely,” said the girl, almost in a whisper.

The knock was more insistent.

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"It mowt be Irving," Harvey whispered.

"He can't get in," returned Kitty quietly.

"And I think I can guess."

Harvey arose slowly and looked at the door. His eyes caught the bolt, and he turned to her. She was standing very, very near him.

Where do women learn this way? Who has taught them to tell so much, though saying nothing? There is much we see in woman's eyes, but it is when they are turned from us that they speak most. Harvey Homer had no past then. All the lonesome time was over. He was living, really living, in the present.

"Some one's rappin' on the window," she cried, suddenly springing from him.

"I don't care if it is Irving," said he grimly. But pressed against the pane he saw a bearded face.

"How could you 'a' peeped?" demanded Kitty, standing by the open door, furiously blushing.

"How was we to know?" said Martin Holmes. "We didn't mean no harm, did we, boys?"

The worthies shook their heads. "Solomon sais 'a wise woman pulleth down the curtain,' "

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said old man Killowill. "He otter knowd, fer he had a thousand wives. Now, he must 'a' had lots o' practice poppin' the question. He must 'a'——"

"See here, Killowill, we're not here to listen to no sermon," cried Martin Holmes. "We come to deliver this mail as has been accumu-latin' at the store all winter fer Mrs. Harvey Homer."

Harvey had sat down very abruptly, and was staring at the company, one hand outstretched to receive the packet. But Kitty was too quick for him.

"You're deliverin' it a day early," she said, smiling. "But I won't open 'em till to-morrow."

"Burn 'em," said Harvey. "You ain't ail-in', Kitty, and from what I know of doctors you'll git lots more of 'em—lots."

THE POSY SONG

SHOULD the lily sing soprano?" That was the question that split the choir, and when the Six Stars choir split the breach was between the houses of Bawkis and Holmes. So, in this instance, the house of Bawkis stood firmly for soprano, while the house of Holmes contended as hotly for contralto. And even Miss Myrtle Shooter, the peace-loving little woman who presided at the melodeon, could not smooth the trouble over. Peace-loving, she swayed through three meetings, from contralto to soprano, from soprano to contralto, and at last in despair declared that she could not see that it made any difference, anyway, as lilies never sang, anyhow.

"But," said Thomas Bawkis, speaking for that house, "I have heard no less than six posy songs. We had a beautiful one at the normal school last year, and I managed it entirely. I arranged the parts and trained the singers. I

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even hung the sheets, cut the holes in them for the heads and painted them up to look like flowers. I was the sunflower myself, singing tenor, and the lily sang soprano. All the lilies I have ever seen sang soprano."

To this the three other Messrs. Bawkis said "Amen," while Anna, their only sister, fumbled with her music-roll. She sang soprano.

Anywhere else than in Six Stars this should have settled the dispute, but Miss Susan Holmes had taken a course at the Airy Grove Seminary and knew just as much about music as any of the Bawkises.

"I sang the lily at Airy Grove myself," she said firmly, "and I'm a contralto. Our soprano was the tulip."

To that the three other Misses Holmes said "Amen," for they all were contraltos, though Miss Lucy prided herself on being also a mezzo-soprano. Edgar Holmes, sitting guarded by two sisters at either side, bowed his head in grave acquiescence. He sang bass, the only bass in the choir, so the matter was to him simply one of family honor.

The four Messrs. Bawkis were firm. The

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four Misses Holmes were firm. Miss Shooter wavered, and for a time it seemed that the church concert must be marred by the omission of its most novel and entertaining feature. When three fruitless meetings had been held, and the existence of the deadlock firmly established, it received recognition at the store, and the merits of the contending parties were discussed with much heat. Martin Holmes naturally took up cudgels in behalf of his four nieces, and right valiantly he laid about him whenever the head of a Bawkis adherent was lifted above the counter. All the Holmeses sang like nightingales, he declared.

“A trained singer like Susan otter know,” he said. “What did she stedy six weeks at Airy Grove fer, I say? The lily’s the main part in the piece. The lily has to do all the trillin’, an’ trullin’, an’ tra-lahin’—the things that takes a trained singer.”

Willie Calker had edged away from the circle swept by the old man’s cane. “Anna Bawkis ’ud make most a mighty pretty lily,” he said stoutly. “For my part, when I’m pay-in’ ten cents admission, I’d ruther have a pretty

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lily and plain singin' than a plain lily and pretty singin'." The boy side-stepped quickly to avoid the carte-point of the old man's cane.

"You hain't no call to talk that way," cried Martin. "The idee of a boy o' your size speakin' so of weemen! What you want is a circus, not a con-cert. And when it comes to concerts, the Holmeses rules. Now, there was the girls' older sister before she mawried——"

"You mean Methusela Holmes?" inquired Willie innocently.

The Holmes girls' uncle executed a right moulinet, following it with a head cut, but the boy had backed behind the stove.

"I mean Palatia Holmes," shouted Martin, "an' you has no right to talk so disrespectful. She was a lady. She mawried Oscar Hockewout, from Turkey Walley, a man what couldn't raise a note, an' within a year he had the most beautiful bass voice you ever listened to. They ain't a man around these parts can go so low as Ossy Hockewout. 'Hen he sings it sounds like it was comin' outen a gushin' well."

"But you take Susan Holmes a-singin' the lily," Willie ventured from a safe perch on the

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counter. "Did you ever see a lily with spectacles?"

"Did you ever see a tulip with red hair, an' a red mustache, an' pop eyes, an' a hook nose?" retorted the old man, pounding the floor with his cane. "Jest think o' Tom Bawkis as a tulip! Mighty souls!"

Echoes of these discussions reached the choir. Susan Holmes was naturally disturbed by the comment on the physical charms of her house, and naturally she was more determined than ever that her family should show what it could do. Likewise with Thomas Bawkis, born as he had been with a superabundance of feelings. Thomas wore those feelings all over him, and it was certain that they would be hurt from whatever quarter he was approached. Now he was deeply stung, and so was more dogged than ever in his determination to show the village what his family could do. Vote after vote was taken, and still the deadlock was unbroken. The week of the concert came, and not one rehearsal of the great sextette had been held, for every ballot on the lily question brought the same result—five votes each for Susan Holmes and

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Anna Bawkis. Miss Shooter was in despair. She began to arrange in secret for an infant cantata, resolved as she was that the programme should have at least one feature more unusual than the long series of duets and solos.

Six Stars never heard that cantata. Such might have been its fortune had not Edgar Holmes, sitting surrounded by sisters at that last choir meeting before the great event, chanced to catch the eye of Anna Bawkis, who was flanked at each side by brothers. She looked quickly to the music on her lap, and Edgar strove to appear unconscious by studying the chart of the posy song that Miss Myrtle had spread across the wall. There he saw, done in crayon, the post of each flower on the line with the name of the singer beside it, in a clear, round, pedagogic hand—at the left the daisy, Miss Emily Holmes, contralto, with the sunflower, Mr. Henry Bawkis, baritone, at her side; at the right the tulip, Mr. T. Bawkis, tenor, with the buttercup, Miss Lucy Holmes, mezzo-soprano. There was his own place, Mr. E. Holmes, basso, and beside him the lily, the post of honor, unfilled and likely to be vacant

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forever. He looked at the girl again and caught one furtive glance; then he sought to hide his confusion in his music.

The melody began to ring through his brain, and softly he began to hum it, beating time all the while with his head:

"I'm a blo-hud, re-hed, ro-ho-hose,
I love the li-hillie."

His sister Emily had to poke him to call him to himself again long enough to drop his ballot in the hat which Miss Shooter was passing around.

He voted. And the deadlock was broken! Miss Anna Bawkis, 6; Miss Susan Holmes, 4.

Miss Lucy Holmes declared that some one had made a mistake, and she demanded that the vote be taken again. Miss Martha supported her, and so did Miss Emily, in spite of Miss Susan's assertions that it made no difference to her personally. Thomas Bawkis was positive that no mistake had been made, but was willing to accede to the ladies' demands and allow one last and decisive ballot. Mr. Bawkis was vindicated and Miss Shooter, to anticipate

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further protests, ran to her chart and wrote the name of Anna Bawkis, soprano, beneath the figure of the lily. A portentous silence followed, the Holmeses glaring at one another, searching one another's blank faces for some evidence of treachery, while the Bawkises smiled in triumph.

"It seems to me," began Thomas pleasantly, "that it is high time we began to practice the piece. Suppose them of us as are posies stand up in line and go over the thing now, so as to get a general idee of the whole."

He was about to rise, when his eyes caught the lily's part. He shot a quick glance at his sister, sitting demurely at his side studying her notes, and from her he looked to Edgar Holmes, whose lips and head were moving in a musical pantomime.

"It seems to me," said Thomas then, with sudden sharpness, "that the rose otter be a tenor."

The house of Holmes declared itself. The music distinctly called for a bass, they said, and the tulip was the tenor part. If Mr. Bawkis actually thought that he knew more than the

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composer, then he and his brothers had better have a male quartet all to themselves and be done with it.

It was hard for Mr. Bawkis to overrule the composer, but he did. He explained that evidently the music had originally been written for a choir that did not have a competent tenor, but he felt positive that his brother John would be able to do the part much more melodiously, with his high, clear voice, than Edgar, with his heavy bass—not but what Mr. Holmes was the best in his line in the valley.

Miss Shooter was in despair. She tore the chart from the wall and declared that she just didn't care. She had given all her time and thought and plannin' to that posy song; she had wrote away for the music; she had got the paints to make the flowers with; she had told everybody all about it. And here it was all fadin' away into an infant cantata, and if there was anything Six Stars was wore out with it was cantatas.

Well, and good, and reasonable, Thomas Bawkis said, but just the same the rose should sing tenor. The whole idee of the piece was a

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passion song, the lily and the rose singing of their love, with the other flowers coming in as seconds, making a background of melody, a setting of harmony; love was a high-flying, cloudlike sentiment that always had its best expression in soaring tenor tones; bass was the voice of great deeds, of power, of battle, and as little akin to tenor as accomplishment to promise.

Susan Holmes returned cuttingly that Mr. Bawkis could sing both bass and tenor to her or to any of her sisters, and she was sure it would not make any difference; her own feelings on the cloudiness of the love sentiment found no better expression than in her single state; she noticed, moreover, that all the Bawkises were tenors—not that she meant to imply anything.

Miss Shooter declared that she never did see such people, and for her part she'd have no more to do with arrangin' special sextets; infants were easier to handle, and she would devote her time to cantatas. With that she began to gather up the music, as a sign that all was at an end.

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Henry Bawkis, the sunflower, not comprehending the latest move of the head of his house, nor understanding why he should be sacrificed on the altar of his brother John's ambition, suggested that they have a ballot on the rose. It was a rule of the choir that a vote must be taken on any question when a member demanded it, and both factions knew so well that this could only be a formal declaration of another deadlock that they consented. So sure were the Holmeses of the result that they were pinning on their hats and gathering up their wraps while Miss Shooter passed the hat about. Thomas Bawkis knew so well what the vote must be that he declared angrily that some one had made a mistake when Miss Myrtle announced six votes for Edgar Holmes and four for John Bawkis. It was perfectly evident, he said, that some one in the choir did not understand the question at issue. Saying this, he glared at his sister, who was so occupied with her music that she seemed neither to see nor hear him. Her lips were moving in a mute solo; her head was swinging in time to the music; her upturned eyes and arched brows

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told that she was taking a high note in her mind.

"It is perfectly clear to me," said Thomas, "that was the real sentiments, the honest opinion of those present, expressed by the ballot on the rose question, there'd be a deadlock."

"An' it's perfectly clear to me," cried Miss Shooter imperiously, taking her place at the melodeon and opening out her music, "that if those of you who are posies don't stand right up now an' begin practicin' there won't be a deadlock—there'll be a cantata."

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"It is through the noble efforts of our choir, working together by a common impulse for a common end," said the Rev. Mr. Spink, in opening the concert, "that we are able to present to-night a program of unrivaled excellence. In behalf of the entire community, I wish to thank them." The pastor waved his hand to the two rows of chairs at the end of the platform, where, under command of Miss Shooter, the choir sat, eyes demurely downcast, fumbling their music-rolls. "And I think," continued Mr. Spink, "that we should now acknowledge our debt

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to the others who are to entertain us to-night—to the little children who are to sing; to Miss Bertha Sponholler, who is to render a guitar solo; to William Calker, who, by the way of a variation, is to recite that inimitable dialect piece, 'How Pumpedink Set the Hen.' "

Right heartily the audience acknowledged its debt, Martin Holmes, in the front row, leading the applause with the loud thumps of his cane, which continued long after the general hand-clapping had ceased and only stopped when his wife peremptorily clasped her hand on the knob of the stick.

"Peace, peace, peace," the anthem by the choir, the first number, was a splendid thing to open with, and set the standard for the rest of the performance. That standard was maintained. Up to the posy song Six Stars had never heard such a concert. Miss Sponholler's guitar solo was a novelty, interesting to a degree because of the oddity of the instrument. Irving Killowill's rendering of "I'm a Little Soldier Boy, Brave and True," evoked storms of applause, for the village had never seen it done with such an elaborate setting, as the boy

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was in uniform and marched up and down with a gun, a sword and a drum, while he piped that battle-song of childhood. John Bawkis's "Tell Me, Darling, Dost Thou Love Me," cast over the company a soft, sentimental mist, which was swept away by the storm and riot of Murphy Kallaberger's cornet. Willie Calker convulsed the audience with the classic story of Puddledink and the hen, and one and all agreed that, though it was not music, it made a welcome break in the programme. At last came the great sextet.

A posy song was not the thing to be stood up and rattled off as though it was of no consequence. It required long, expectant waiting on the part of the audience, with frequent shuffles of feet and impatient handclaps. It required a curtain to be spread across the church, with mysterious whispering and flutterings behind it, and Miss Shooter running out before it every now and then for no other purpose than to run back again. Mr. Spink had to rise suddenly from his pew, and go behind the scenes, and come back looking very serious and shaking his head. Willie Calker got excited and pulled

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the curtains apart too soon, so the cries behind them drowned the applause of the house. Everybody in the choir wanted to remove the boy from his post of honor, but it was very dark behind the scenes, the only bracket-lamp flickering dreadfully, and he threatened to take his new bull's-eye lantern with him if they made him go. Miss Shooter had found that indispensable in her work of putting the last touches on the flowers. Miss Sponholler ran out and got Mr. Spink. The pastor hurried behind the scenes again, and returned to his seat looking graver than ever. Miss Myrtle absently sprang before the curtain, turned the bull's-eye on the audience, screamed and disappeared. The audience became restless, and Martin Holmes beat the floor with his cane. John Holmes stepped forth, with one hand upraised, and asked every one to be quiet, as "it" was about to begin. Every one obeyed, and for five minutes absolute silence reigned. The strain was too much. Some bad boys in the rear of the church began to whistle shrilly, while the better ones in front hissed. That brought Miss Belle Spink forth to the melodeon, and when

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she screwed up the stool, spread out the music and feathered her fingers over the keys every one said, "At last!" and settled back to real enjoyment. Instead Miss Spink played a very long solo. It had the desired effect, for there was absolute silence for some minutes after she had disappeared into the enshrouded platform. Then pandemonium broke loose. Mr. Spink had to rise in his place and quell the confusion by an appeal for the patience of the company.

But even posy songs must begin some time. Miss Shooter took her place at the melodeon, smiling, and all was well. She screwed the stool down again. She arranged the music. She cried, "Now!"

Willie Calker drew the curtain.

There were the six giant posies that Miss Myrtle had painted on a screen of sheets, all in a row, the daisy and the sunflower, the lily and the rose, the buttercup and the tulip. The heads of the singers, projecting through holes, formed the centres, about which she had builded and painted the bursting buds, with their tall, green stalks, and so natural did they look that everybody cried, "Ah!" and so prolonged was

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the applause that it was some moments before Edgar Holmes could start. At last the melodeon drowned the audience, and in that heavy voice of his he began:

"I'm a blo-hud, re-hed, ro-ho-hose,
I love the li-hillee."

Anna Bawkis quickly demonstrated that the Holmeses were not the only women in the valley who could trill and trull and tra-lah. She turned her eyes to the ceiling and went soaring:

"I'm a li-hillee,
A beutcheous li-hillee,
I love the ro-hose."

And all this time Henry Bawkis, from the sunflower's heart, was baritoning, "Oh, fie—fie—fie." And at the other end of the sheet Thomas Bawkis, the tulip, was tossing high C's in the air while he sang of the "Blo-uh-uh-ud, re-eh-eh-ed, ro-ho-ho-hose." And the daisy and the buttercup were echoing "She-loves-the-ro-hose."

The rose loved the lily. He told her so in fifty different keys. When he was not hurling it forth, the others were doing so in soaring notes while he said, "Rum-rum-rum-rum-rum-rum."

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The lily loved the rose. She vowed it unblushingly before all that company. She trilled it forth; she trilled it forth; she tra-lahed it forth. Oft in the dewy eve, she said, she thought of him, when the moon was gleaming o'er the sea and the evening shadows fell.

Of course everybody knew it was just singing. Of course everybody would have thought so to this day had it not been for Willie Calker. Of course it was purely an accident that Willie, at his post behind the scenes should turn his lantern for just that one second. It was just one second, too, but there on the white sheet glowed that fiery bull's-eye.

"I lo-hove the li-hillee," sang the unconscious rose.

"I lo-hove the ro-hose," sang the unconscious lily.

How that posy song should have ended Six Stars never learned. It never saw another. Of this one the climax was a scream from the lily, a growl from the rose. The melodeon was silent in a flash and Miss Shooter sprang to close the curtain. Then nothing could be seen. There was the wall of muslin to cover it all.

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But Willie Calker could be heard protesting that he meant no harm; he'd turned the lantern around just one teeny bit of a second; he was only curious. Thomas Bawkis could be heard declaring that he suspected it all along, and Anna Bawkis said she didn't care who saw it, and Edgar Holmes proclaimed his freedom in no uncertain tones. The wails of the four Misses Holmes would have drowned all else had not the audience risen to its feet and cheered. Even the raised hand of Mr. Spink could not silence the uproar.

But in the climax of that posy song the figure that in the memory of Six Stars comes out boldest, rising above the storm of music, is Martin Holmes, a bent old form, standing there that one second when Willie Calker was curious, pointing with his cane to the brilliant bull's-eye among the posies and to the silhouette there.

Above the melodeon's wheezy strains, above the trilling and the trulling, above the rum-rum-rumming of the bass, sounded his high, cracked voice:

“The rose is a-holtin' the lily's hand.”

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IT was on a drowsy August morning that the angels came to Six Stars. We worthies were on our bench, our faces turned to the warm sunshine, smoking lazily, listening as much to the rumble of the mill as to the monotonous discourse of Andrew Binn, for the teacher was always talking. Andrew was like the mill. Had he stopped we would have looked around, wondering what the trouble was. But he was going that day, steadily, and his discourse would have made no more distinct impression than the thumping of the water-wheel, had it not been for the strange events that followed.

As we recall it now, he was telling us of his new home, for he had just settled in Lucien Pulsifer's little house at the end of the village. He was dilating on the beauty of tradition. He was defending himself against the charge, as yet not made, that he was superstitious.

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“Tray-dition is romance,” he said. “It is the intellectual heritage of a people. Now, suppose you uns, if you’d ‘a’ bought Pulsifer’s place, would paint that Amish gate yellor or some other fancy color. But I says to myself: ‘What is life without tray-dition?’ The gate was blue—the blue of heaven—a sign to passin’ angels that here an Amishman lived—a call to them to come in and bless the home. Of course I’m a Methodist, but I have some artistic taste. I’m a bachelor, and I says to myself—it was just a joke between me and myself—‘Blue the gate shall stay,’ I says, ‘and mebbe an angel will come some day and——’ ”

Now it was that the strange things began to happen. Piney Kallaberger appeared, out of breath from hard running. Piney is generally a harbinger of evil.

“Teacher—teacher—teacher,” he cried.

Andrew never liked to be interrupted, and the frown on his face checked the lad, who clasped a hand to his throat and gasped.

“Well, Piney,” said the pedagogue, when he had gazed the intruder into a proper humility, “what can I do for you?”

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"Nothin'," answered the boy, backing away fearfully. "Nothin', but——"

"But what?" Andrew Binn's tone was fatherly and encouraging.

"Nothin', but I just seen two Amish ladies go into your house," faltered Piney.

Andrew sprang to his feet. "You see what?" he cried.

"I seen two Amish ladies—two old Amish ladies—go into your house," was the whimpered reply.

"Angels," cried old Martin Holmes, suddenly awaking. "Mebbe they is angels," He, too, was on his feet, and he made a feint at the boy with his stick. "Tell the truth—cross your fingers, sonny—honest Injun—had they wings?"

"No, sir. They come in a livery riggin'."

"They came how?" cried Andrew, moving to seize his pupil by the collar.

The boy dodged and sprang from the porch. "They came in a livery riggin'," he answered from the road. "The man who was drivin', he asts me, 'Is this Lucien Pulsifer's place? These ladies has come from Kansas to wisit him,' he

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says. When I forgot and told him it was Lucien's house he set them down there and——”

“Where is he now?” Andrew shouted, diving at the boy.

But Piney shot away. “He's gone, teacher, gone down the big walley agin,” he cried, as he tore along, making for a refuge behind the mill.

Andrew Binn stood mopping his brow and looking up the road to the turn, as if he would bend his gaze there and see his little house at the end of the village.

“Don't git het up,” said Hartin Holmes soothingly. “It's only a tray-dition, a be-yutiful tray-dition, an' you must devote yourself to fixin' 'em comfortable. You must make your home a heaven for 'em. S'pose we goes up there now an' sees about carrying in their trunk an'——”

“Don't trouble yourself,” snapped the teacher. “I am amply able to take care of my own affairs. When I need your aid, rest assured, I'll ask for it.”

He swung away toward home.

Martin Holmes sat down on the porch, threw

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back his head and pushed his beard up over his face. This was a precaution the old man always took when suffering an extreme attack of merriment. Seven of his family had died of apoplexy and six of heart disease, and since his seventieth birthday he had been in constant fear of "explodin'" if he allowed himself the full enjoyment of his mirth. Moses Pole could not see what the trouble was about. His wife's sister was Amish, and frequently made his family long visits which they really enjoyed, and because old Holmes was not religious was no excuse for his laughing at folks who were so pious that they wore no buttons. Aaron Jones agreed fully with the bark-peeler, and if by any chance the teacher was in need of a rigging to send the Amish ladies back to the big valley, there was his white mule standing idle in the stable. The rest of the store was non-committal. We had too few facts to announce ourselves in sympathy with either Andrew Binn and his romantic fancies or the aged and practical Holmes. We sat patiently on the long bench, smoking and thinking, awaiting the coming of the pedagogue with a full report. He

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allowed us nearly a half an hour of meditation before he reappeared.

Now, Andrew Binn had always prided himself on being high-strung. He regarded himself as a delicate physical mechanism, tuned to the highest possible pitch of intellectuality, and so, when gently handled, productive of much that was good and beautiful, but likely to become unstrung by the slightest jar. It was evident that in that half hour something had gone askew with his intellectual stringing. He was badly out of tune.

"Can any of you speak Dutch?" he asked, after he had mopped his face with his bandanna, dusted the back of his head with it, brushed the brim of his hat with it, rubbed up the buttons of his waistcoat with it, and closed by flicking the mud from his shoes. His old sprightliness of manner was gone. The question came as a plea for aid, not as a demand.

"I used to could—a leetle," spoke up Martin Holmes.

The crowd started and stared at him. This was the first time he had ever admitted knowing a word of the language, for he had always

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boasted himself of the purest Scotch-Irish descent, but now he was smiling blandly, as though the confession caused not the least pang. Noting the general astonishment, he added: "I learned it when I was a drove-yer. Every educated man should know German. In fact, if you are goin' to travel it's a necessity, for in some parts o' Pennsylvany you'll hear nothin' else."

"Can you speak it loud?" asked the teacher, laying a hand on the old man's arm as a sign to him to arise and follow.

"Can I speak it loud?" cried Martin, a bit testily. "Why, that's the only way I can speak it."

"The Amish ladies are de-e-f," explained Andrew, tucking his arm lovingly under that of his ancient enemy.

Through the village our little company went, two and two, Andrew and Martin leading, a solemn procession, past the public pump, around the bend, through the blue gate at the house at the end of the street, and, without the formality of a knock, into the living room, where the strangers sat, one at either end of the stove.

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The visitors were evidently very much at home, for they had the fire going and were watching the kettle boil when the company shuffled in. With true earthly femininity, each quickly adjusted her white cap and smoothed the wrinkles from her plain, brown gown. Then they smiled pleasantly.

"The Amish ladies," said Andrew, waving his hand toward the strangers.

"The angels," said Martin solemnly. And in a musing tone that all might hear he added, "About seventy—no wings—blue tin trunk—uses ear-trumpets—likely to bless the house with a good long stay."

"Mind here, Martin," exclaimed Andrew, with a revival of his old spirit, "can't you realize they haven't come to visit me. It's Pul-sifer they came to see, and I've tried for half an hour to explain to them how as he had moved to Ioway, and all they says is 'yah.' "

"Meanin' yes," said Martin, gravely wagging his head.

"Meanin' nothin'," snapped the teacher. "I've been yellin' at them in English as loud as I can that they've made a mistake and there is

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no result. Watch the kettle boil! They'll be fryin' my ham next."

To relieve the embarrassing silence that followed this one-sided colloquy, the youngest of the angels arose and rattled the stove door. As she did so her skirt caught her ear-trumpet and swept it to the floor. There was a scramble for it, and Andrew, being nearest, secured it.

"Now explain," he commanded to Martin, waving his prize at the angel, who had resumed her place and was groping about the chair in a vain search which gave evidence that, besides being very deaf, she was exceedingly near-sighted.

"You hold it and I'll try," said Martin, with a sigh of resignation. "You uns all knows I never blowed about my German, but mebbe I can land a word or two that will help."

Andrew placed the end of the trumpet in the angel's hand, still retaining his hold on it. Then he drew the old man toward him by the sleeve and said "Begin!"

The angel, understanding that her visitors were about to establish a line of communication, smiled encouragingly and prepared to listen.

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Martin handed his cane to one of the group that pressed about him, and, leaning well over with a hand on each knee and his mouth close to the trumpet, he shouted:

“*Wie gehts?*”

“*Goot,*” the angel answered.

“She says she is well, an’ so is her sister,” the interpreter explained gravely, turning to the company.

“It ain’t her health as is bothering us,” snapped the teacher. “Tell her about Pul-sifer.”

“Give me time to think,” returned the old man angrily. “German ain’t so easy as it looks—petickler when you have to talk it into a machine.”

He pulled his beard violently, closed one eye, and gazed at the sister behind the stove, seeking there an inspiration. It came at last, and he took a long breath and shouted into the trumpet, “*Wie bist du?*”

“*Goot!*” The angel had raised her voice until there was a sharp ring in it. The complacent smile had disappeared and she frowned at her inquisitor.

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"She says her sister is exceedingly well—exceptional well, I should judge from the way she said it," Martin explained.

"I could 'a' found that out be lookin' at 'em," broke in Aaron Jones.

"Tell her about Pulsifer," cried the teacher, stamping his foot.

"I was leadin' up to that," returned Martin blandly. "Give me time, Andrew. We mustn't break it to 'em sudden." He resumed his crouching attitude over the trumpet, and, after a moment's pause, shouted: "*Wo kommst du hier?*"

The frown left the angel's face, and she smiled and nodded.

"Kansas," she replied.

"She says she comes from Kansas," cried Martin in triumph, straightening up and smiling gleefully at the company. "She tells me that the other Amish lady is her sister an' that she also comes from Kansas, an' that they are here to visit Lucien Pulsifer who is a relation of some kind."

"Explain about Pulsifer." Binn laid an angry hand on the old man's shoulder, and spun

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him around and pushed him down toward the trumpet.

"Can't you give me time," Martin pleaded. "She speaks low German; mine's high, an' it takes a heap of thinkin' to get 'em to hitch together right."

There was an ominous silence. To relieve its embarrassment, the sister behind the stove arose and rattled the iron door. Martin stroked his beard long and seriously, until at length the inspiration came. Raising a warning finger to still the mutters of discontent beginning to arise from the group behind him, he shouted: "*Vom wo bist du?*"

"Kansas—Kansas—Kansas," cried the angel angrily, tearing her trumpet from the teacher's supporting hand and shaking it at the interpreter. "Kansas, *Ich sag*t—Kansas."

Martin took a hasty step back to avoid the waving instrument, and, in a voice now tremulous with emotion, whether fear or merri-ment we could not tell, he said, "She allows she's from Kansas—her sister is also from Kansas."

"Tell her about Pulsifer," exclaimed An-

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drew, who had quickly recovered his hold on the trumpet and dragged the old man into range again. The interpreter struggled to free himself.

"See here, you," he expostulated, "give me time. You uns talk like German otter jest roll offen my tongue. Now, if it was the regular high, I could tell her all about Pulsifer, but she speaks low. Her an' me have come to the diwidin' line of language. Why, I could yell high German at her from now to next Christmas an' it 'ud sound to her about as sensible as Latin—can't you see that?"

"Mind here, Martin," retorted Andrew, "if these weemen had settled in your house, I allow you'd talk low German first-rate as long as they was boilin' your kittle and fryin' your ham." His voice sank into an argumentative tone. "I haven't done you no harm, and if you was in my place, and your house was invaded, and you come to me and asted my help, and I knowd German, why, I'd talk it, high, low or mejum, whatever was needed—you know I would, wouldn't I?"

The murmur of approval that followed this

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plea showed clearly that to the minds of the others the matter had become one of village importance, and that the sympathy was with the pedagogue in his effort to drive the invaders from his hearthstone. As old Holmes scanned the faces behind him, he noted the hostile wagging of heads and realized that the time had come for him to make a serious effort to succor the teacher. If the mere wish would have done it, he would have screamed a volume of German into the trumpet, but when he declared that the angel and he had come to a parting of the ways of language, he had spoken truth. His first offer to act as interpreter had had its rise not in any desire to help Andrew in his predicament, but in his curiosity to see the angels that had come to bless the house with the blue gate. That blue gate had been closed to him until the teacher's need of an interpreter compelled him to call in the store for assistance. Then he had made the best of his opportunity, and now he was at his rope's end. He knew it, but he could not retire in the face of his companions' disapproving scowls. So he bent over once more and opened his mouth at the

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trumpet. He closed it again and pulled at his beard, as though surprised that no word had come forth.

"Tell 'em about Pulsifer, do, Martin," pleaded Andrew.

"*Wie—Wie—Wie*," the old man began.

"Go ahead," commanded Andrew, giving him a gentle shake.

"*Wie, wie——*" The angel straightened up and stared severely at Martin. If he had anything to say, it fled from him then.

"*Wie—wie—wie——*" He failed and angrily tore himself free of Andrew, and turned on him. "See here," he cried, "I'm not goin' to mix in no more with my German. She can't understand—can't you see that? This here is a perilous language an' there's no tellin' what they might think I was sayin' if I spoke high an' they thought it was low. No, sir, Andrew Binn, you painted your gate blue an' now you can lay on it."

There was no appeal. With a defiant wave of his stick, the old man strutted out of the house to the road, shutting the blue gate after him with a vicious click. Perhaps he felt that

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his retreat was inglorious and his conduct ungracious, for we did not see him at the store at all that afternoon, but when evening came, bringing with it his old ally, the darkness, he sidled up on the porch and took his place at the end of the bench. For a long time he was unusually silent, leaning forward and resting his chin on his cane, apparently drinking in the music of the frogs.

Suddenly he turned to the teacher and inquired, "Gone yit?"

"Who?" asked the other sharply.

"Them Amish angels," said the old man solemnly.

The only reply was a low growl.

"Andrew has moved down to my place," came from the end of the bench, where, in the darkness, Moses Pole's cigar was glowing. "It's an aggerwatin' situation, but what can a feller do?"

"Why didn't you uns explain after I left?" said Martin in an injured tone. "You was so mad at me fer mixin' my German, an' yet not a hate would you do for yourselves. The Lord helps them as helps themselves, an' them that

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helps others need no encouragement, as the feller sais."

"Didn't who explain?" cried Andrew. "Humph! Why they was in hysterics agin you got through with 'em."

"They dropped their trumpets," Moses Pole put in.

"An' they jest wouldn't tech 'em agin. They wanted to hear no more," added Aaron Jones. "The harder we tried to explain the highstericaller they got."

"Poor old weemen." Martin's voice was mournful, but he pounded the floor viciously with his cane. "Poor old angels—fur from home—nephey gone—deef an' friendless—most a'mighty sad."

"Sad," snapped Binn, poking his aged neighbor with his elbow. "Sad? How about me, I'd like to know. I goes home to-night, allowin' I'd slip into bed early—door half open—kitchen clear—sneaks into me room an' lights a can'le, an' there them Amish weemen was, the two of 'em, in my bed, a sleepin' away as peaceful as lambs. How about me, Martin—that's the sad part."

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"You otter 'a' woke 'em up an' explained," the old man retorted blandly. "The hull thing was scan'alous—you a standin' there in them poor Amish ladies' room—them 'a' sleepin' so ca'm, an' peaceful, an' innercent. Why didn't you yell?"

"I did," was the teacher's weary answer. "I done it in half a dozen languages—I jest——"

"Of course you forgot to put in their ear trumpets—of course—of course," Martin cried. "It's easier to wake the dead than the deef without a trumpet. This thing is gittin' scan'alouser, an' scan'alouser. I'm tired of it. Next you'll be after me to go up there to try to wake 'em up in German—but I won't, boys, mind that—I won't. You don't git me fussin' no more with angels."

He closed his speech with a bang of his cane. There was silence on the porch, for a long time, till at last Martin suddenly arose, and pointed away to the ridge, where a tiny red coal was blazing among the trees.

"It's the moon, boys," he said, lifting his cane. "Mind how nice she looks! It's jest the

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night fer the angels to be with us, an' the whole valley seems to be lullin' 'em to sleep. Do ye catch the light yander on the hill? That's Harvey Homer; he's settin' late readin' the Good Book, an' I allow mebbe he's wonderin' if they is such things as angels. That's a good un on him, ain't it, settin' up there so ignorant an' innercent, while down here, right among us, sleepin' in our beds, boilin' our kittle, fryin' our ham, we have two fine ones! Accordin' to present prospects, they are likely to spend quite some time with us, too, an' we'll have to get together an' study low German so we can make 'em understand. Meantime—no wio-
lence—mind ye—no wio-
lence. Some of us might go up oncet in a while to keep them trumpets workin', but there must be no more mobbin'—no more mobbin'. Let's be patient-like an' long-sufferin'—board the teacher free an' lodge him—stedy low German reg'lar, an' then mebbe some day they'll fly away. Angels is angels, even if they is deaf, and they must be treated respectable. Ours is short on quality, but mebbe if we use 'em right the next uns that comes to bless us 'll be

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younger an' speak high German or reg'lar Pennsylvanian."

Ours is a blessed valley. Leave behind you the rolling fields of Kishikoquillas, where rest is broken by the rumble of the railroad, distant but eternal, cross the mountain, and you will reach a land where peace is, if the world has not racked your heart past mending, and ambition has not made a glutton of you. Well might angels tarry here—especially if they have come from Kansas! Out there you see the world rolling away forever; earth and sky are boundless and you so little. We have our mountains to shut the vastness out, and fewer of us seem to share the sunshine. Our part of life is bigger. So, when you have a pleasant house, with a weedless garden at whose foot a broad creek chatters all day long; when a wide-spreading tree drops yellow apples in your very lap; and from the benches on the porch you can watch the sun and clouds make strange shadow puzzles on the hillsides, you probably will stay—at least till frost comes.

Our angels stayed. They made themselves

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thoroughly comfortable against the return of Pulsifer. Long we debated how to set them right again, and start them on their way, but the counsel of Martin Holmes always prevailed. His advice was reasonable, and so easy for all but the teacher to follow that we began to accept it without question. But Andrew wearied of his banishment from his own roof after a day or two, and began to clamor for an eviction. It was easy enough, he argued, for the others to allow the angels to stay so complacently in his house and live on his larder. Were it only for a day or week, he would not object, but he might have to wait for them to die before he could return to enjoy the home he had won by years of intellectual labor of the hardest and most trying kind. Six Stars admitted this. But where was the remedy, except to wait? He could not shoot them. To turn them out he would have to use force, and the village would not see a hand laid on two deaf old women who were hurting no one one. It was proper that Andrew should argue with them. It was all right for him to visit them daily and enact a pantomime intended to convey to them the idea

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of their nephew packing his trunk and departing for Iowa. More than this Six Stars would not allow. So he sat on the store porch and fumed.

The pantomime was in vain. Day after day the teacher visited his house and went through the mute performance, but seeing a gaunt, sallow man enter their little kitchen, unpack a carpet-bag on the floor, replace it, and then walk out of the door and through the gate, pointing off into the blue, presumably toward Iowa, conveyed no idea to the angels except that this was the village idiot. Every performance made this conviction firmer, and they smiled with pity on what little of the dumb play their nearsightedness permitted them to see.

Six Stars was patient; Andrew Binn restless and fiery. Martin Holmes said wait. And the old man was right. A letter came one day, addressed to the mayor, and, there being no such officer in the village, Ned Smith, by virtue of his postmastership, opened it. Then he quickly dispatched Piney Kallaberger from house to house to assemble the male populace. To this

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solemn company he read from the long sheet of foolscap a communication from his honor, the mayor of Keoria, Kansas :

“Sir—I am requested by Mr. Fritz Kalkarp, a respected Amish gentleman residing in this vicinity, to demand that you take immediate steps for the protection of his sisters, the Misses Kalkarp, who are now in your midst, being daily subjected to untold indignities. Going to your town to visit their nephew, one Pulsifer, they found him missing, and, being his nearest of kin, settled on his property. They have written to Mr. Kalkarp than an effort has been made to drive them from their home; a riotous crowd of men have visited them almost daily, greatly disturbing their peace of mind by making light of their unfortunate physical affliction of deafness. Their sleep has been even disturbed by a lunatic, who has ruthlessly entered their room at night. This said person has caused them the greatest trouble. They say he seems to labor under the hallucination that he owns the house. I appeal to you, sir, in the name of decency and justice, to

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act at once to insure the safety of these respected Amish ladies.

“I am, sir, your obedient servant,

“ARCHIBALD MASTERS, Mayor.”

Andrew Binn crumpled the county paper into a ball and hurled it violently at the stove, as if he saw there his honor of Keoria. Before he could speak Martin Holmes placed one hand on his shoulder and gently tapped him with the head of his cane. “You have been long-sufferin’, Andrew,” the old man said, in a more gentle tone than he usually used toward the teacher; “you have been noble—but you insisted in believin’ in blue gates, an’ you reaped your reward. We all sayd wait, for there was nothin’ else to do, but now the end’s come. It’s a long way to Kansas, but jest you buy a sheet o’ paper, an envelop an’ a stamp, and we’ll explain to this here mayor of Keoria about Pulsifer. He’ll tell Kalkarp, an’ I allow that that Amish gentleman won’t mix high an’ low German, an’ tangle ’em up in those ear-trumpets.”

So the angels left us. A livery rigging came from the big valley for them not many days

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later, and, as they drove away, we stood by the blue gate and watched them.

“They has flew away, boys,” Martin Holmes said, pointing to a cloud of dust on the hill by the peach orchard. “They’ve gone, like Elijy, takin’ their blue tin trunk an’ ear-trumpets with ’em. They’ve left the house, an’—an’— What’s that you have in your hand, Andrew? White paint—a can of it? Mighty souls, man, don’t git discouraged by jest the one catch. Mind the tray-dition—the be-uytiful tray-dition of the angels, an’ the blue gate.”

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HERE'S your *News*," the storekeeper said, pushing the county paper very formally through the little window in the case of glass-fronted pigeon-holes at the end of the counter. After he had critically inspected the letter he held in his hand, he passed that through the window, too. Then he peered around the side of the post-office to see how it was received.

The fortunate one was a tall young man, who stood hesitatingly eying the missive; now the back, now the front, upside down and catty-cornered, as if he doubted that it was for him. But it was for him. There in a bold copy-book hand, every letter perfect in its form and slant, was written:

*Mr. Robert Twoller, B. E.,
City.*

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"Isn't it yours, Rawb?" inquired the storekeeper testily, as though the delay were cheating him out of some choice bit of news.

The other made no reply, but he drew a knife from his pocket, carefully opened the envelope and walked to the window, where, in the seclusion formed by his own back, he could be alone.

This is what he read:

"MY DEAR MR. TWOLLER:

"Your kind bequest that I be your lady this evening at the lecture on Success, at the Teachers' Institute by the Rev. Waldo Tangerian, the converted Turk, has been received and is excepted with pleasure. I will be ready the minute of six, so you need not hitch when you come to the house. Just call good and I will run out. Your affectionate friend,

"VIOLA KATE COOPER."

"Isn't it for you, Rawb?" again inquired the storekeeper in his most insinuating tones, lounging out from his post behind the counter.'

The only reply that he got was a smile.

"The handwriting was that of a stranger," he went on. "It puzzled me, it did, and——"

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This Robert Twoller was a peculiar fellow! For, though he smiled again—a bland, good-humored smile, he stepped quickly out of the door, slamming it most impolitely. But he had a right to smile. The note more than made up for the disappointment of the previous day, when Viola had been unable to attend the institute at Pleasantville and hear him read his paper on “The Best Methods of Diagramming.” That paper was the effort of his life, and he had wanted her to witness his triumph. All the teachers in the county, assembled in the courthouse, had heard his argument, and they were unanimous in declaring that he had clearly proved the superiority of his system. He had shown them that it confused the youthful mind to diagram a sentence after this manner:

John	
	big
hit	
	hard
William	
	little

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Much easier of comprehension by the young pupil was his method of the juxtaposition of the subject, predicate, and object, with the modifying adjectives and adverb:

John	hit	William
b	h	l
i	a	i
g	r	t
	d	t
		l
		e

He had wanted her to witness his triumph, but a headache had played him false. He had even doubted that headache, and had feared to risk another rebuff; but to-morrow she was to leave East Harmons ville and return to her home in Kishikoquillas; so, in a nervous hand, he had written his request that she accompany him to the lecture by the converted Turk. She had accepted. To-night he was to have a seven-mile drive with her, and if in all that distance, skimming along in the silence of the snow-muffled night, he could not tell her all that was nearest his heart, then seven miles home from Pleasantville still remained.

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As he walked up the village street, pressing her note in his hand, he planned it all out. After they had gone a great while, away from the town, out into the white, silent land, so far that it would seem that in all the universe they were alone—just the two of them—he would tell her. Perhaps she would open up by saying, “I’m going to Kishikoquillas to-morrow.” Then he would trust the choosing of the way to that wise horse of his, and would whisper: “Don’t, Miss Cooper. I know Kishikoquillas is a nicer valley than ours, and that there you will find men more worthy of you. I offer you all I have. I’ve a farm. It’s small, but, with the help of lime and phosafits, it will raise enough for two. I’ve a school, and the East Harmons ville school is one of the best in the county. I’m finely educated, as you can see by my degree. I got it at the Airy Grove Normal School. I’m a Bachelor of Elements.”

They drove that night through the white, silent country as he had planned. They were all alone, side by side, in the close grasp of the sleigh. In the starlight and snowlight he could see the girl’s face, framed in a red hood

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and rosy in the keen wind. Her mood was quieter, too, and she did not chaff him, as was her liking so often, but spoke in a gentle pensiveness. Then, after a long silence, broken only by the jingle of the bells and the crunching of the snow beneath hoof and runner, she said: "I'm going back to Kishikoquillas tomorrow;" and he said, "Kishikoquillas must be a nice place." His opportunity had passed! It was a pure slip on his part, he told himself again and again, and if she had not taken him so by surprise he would have swung in with his declaration. Woman-like, she gave him no other chance. She spoke again, but it was to complain of the cold, and by the time he had prepared himself for his ordeal they were at the court-house steps, in the full glare of the light that streamed from the open doorway.

When Robert Twoller allowed himself that margin of the seven miles homeward drive in event of his first failure, he had reckoned without the Rev. Waldo Tangerian, and the converted Turk's personality was not to be slighted. The man's dark face, his long hair, massive shoulders, tall, loosely hung frame spoke of

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power to Robert the moment the young man's eyes rested on him. And the impression gained by this inspection from the seat in the centre of the crowded court-room was strengthened and garnished by Associate Judge Spong.

"Our privilege to-night is a great one," said Judge Spong. He stood forth in the yellow lamp-glare, his sack coat carefully folded back as to show a broad expanse of shirt bosom, bounded by a low-cut waistcoat of fancy cloth, with a heavy gold watch chain stretching across in front. "Not only to the teachers of the county, gathered here in convention, but to the laymen I see with us to-night, it will come as an inspiration to see and hear the words of one who, throughout all this broad land of ours, stands forth as the very apotheosis of success. Born in an humble hut in the Carpathian Mountains, of a Turkish father and a Turkish mother, and all that means, surrounded in infancy by all the darkness of that pagan land, he has risen to the heights where few men tread. The little Turkish boy is to-day a Christian minister, at the head of one of the greatest churches in the great city of Philadelphia. But

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a few days since it was my privilege to visit him in his lovely home in Spring Garden Street, where he gathers about him all the greatest and wisest of the land, and, standing there on the threshold, I cried aloud to myself, 'Suck-cess—aye—suck-cess!' "

Success was the watchword of the night! The very air seemed charged with achievement! Fame was at everybody's hand, and awaiting only for an introduction.

"When I think of suck-cess," began the converted Turk, after he had taken a copious draught of water and paused a moment till there was absolute silence save for the clinking of the ice in the pitcher at his side, "I have only to turn to my right hand and look on the distinguished jurist who has presented me to you with such kind words." Now the Associate Judge, as everybody knows, is a coal dealer whose legal activities are confined to road views and the minor duties of the court; but that made no difference to the Reverend Waldo. "I can not tell you how well we in Philadelphia love Judge Spong," he went on. "I can not tell you how grand it is, my dear friends, that a

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community should have in its midst such a monument of judicial integrity and learning, such a shining beacon of Christian virtue and charity, and withal so modest and simple."

The distinguished Turk turned on his heels and bowed to Judge Spong. The distinguished jurist acknowledged the compliment with an inclination of the head and a deprecating wave of a fat hand. The lecturer did not stop to press the point further home, but proceeded to place himself on friendly terms with his audience by drawing a large handkerchief from the tails of his frock coat. Dignity vanishes before a sneeze. The pocket-handkerchief is the flag of humanity. It always flies inverted, the ensign of our mortality. The Reverend Waldo knew that. He signalled thus to the uttermost part of the hall that, though he was great, he was still a man, like the humblest teacher before him.

The opening was very simple and quiet. Life, the speaker said, was like a ladder, up which we climb rung by rung. Some reach the top where Success is, and from that high pinnacle view the world. Others fall back, then

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struggle up again, only to fall once more and sink at last in the mire of Failure! The Reverend Waldo smiled. There flashed to his mind the case of a German he once knew, an honest, simple-minded man, who bet a dollar that an Irishman could not carry him up a ladder to the top of a three-story dwelling. Success was in the Irishman's grasp. The roof was almost in his reach when he cried: "I lose!" and dropped the German. The Teuton died, the Reverend Waldo said.

Through the court-room there was a solemn silence, then an uncertain shuffling of feet, then a titter and a roar.

Robert Twoller for an instant felt a pang of sympathy for the German. Then he leaned back and laughed, and laughed, and poked Viola with his elbow.

"He is certainly good!" he exclaimed.

But if Robert expected that this lecture was to deal with the lighter things of life, he was mistaken; for, while the speaker at times relieved the solemnity of his rolling periods with felicitous anecdotes of the Irishman, the Negro, or the Little Girl in his church at home, the

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trend of his thought was to inspire his hearers to noble effort and accomplishment. Robert felt himself carried away from the littleness of his own life, from the narrowness of his valley and the pettiness of his village, to the great world where men fought and died for right and wrong. With Alexander he conquered the world; with Cæsar he ruled Rome; with Napoleon, the Corsican lad, he battled his way to a throne; with Lincoln, the rail-splitter, and Garfield, of the tow-path, he cut his way to the White House. In one of those solemn intervals, while Tangerian poured a glass of water and drained it, the young man turned to himself again. What stupidity and egotism had been his! But for this great Turk's awakening him, he would have gone on forever, puffed up with the pride of his little learning and his B. E. Now only the wisdom of a Galileo or a Newton could appease his hunger for knowledge; only the glory of a Darwin could quench his thirst for fame. On the morrow he would place his foot upon the ladder and begin the climb. He promised himself that, as the Reverend Waldo was for the last time signalling with his hand-

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kerchief that he was human and susceptible to draughts, before he began the peroration that was to draw his hearers to the perilous edges of their seats and silence their restless breathing and unruly heart-beats.

"Isn't he lovely?" whispered Viola.

"He's elegant," was the answer.

Robert had forgotten the girl. Now she came to him as an unpleasant reality. He looked at her and wondered how he had ever dreamed of hampering himself in his climb with the burden of such a plump little thing as she was. Viola was pretty, distractingly so, but the soldier going forth to battle does not encumber himself with beautiful works of art. She was fair to look at, she was gentle and good to be with, and were he to waste his life away in his own valley, he could ask no better company. But a new life had opened to him. He was called to high endeavor. Perhaps when he reached the topmost rung he would find there waiting for him, with smiling face and outstretched hands, a woman worthy of a victor. Bonaparte, the poor Corsican boy, had won a princess of Austria, Tangerian said, and in the

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great preacher's own congregation a young man who had begun life as a homeless newsboy had just earned the hand of the fairest and richest woman in Spring Garden Street. Robert smiled when he thought of his own escape. The Fates had been with him on that seven-mile drive, and they would be with him on the morrow and ever after as he fought his way alone to Success.

Tangerian said it was grand to fight alone, in the glory of one's own strength. He paused. With hands folded behind him, he walked thrice across the platform. Turning slowly on his heels, with martial precision, he raised one hand and pointed away off into the Future.

"We look down the river of Time," he said. "Ceaselessly it flows before us. Countless are its whirlpools and its eddies. We shudder as we contemplate its cruel rocks and fearful rapids. And you and I—shall we cast ourselves upon the waters? Shall we float down that ceaseless river, paper ships, to be hurled about on every tide and eddy, until at last we are swallowed up in the vast sea of nonentity? Shall we, I say? Or shall we, with mighty

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stroke of arm, breast the rapids and the whirlpools, swimming ever upward, heedless of the countless perils, spurning jutting rock and cruel eddy, until at last we reach that high plain whence flows the river, and there, looking out, survey the world?"

It seemed to Robert Twoller that he had begun to swim. All around him the teachers surged, and he stupidly pulled on his overcoat and twisted his muffler about his neck without helping Viola with her tangled wraps. He plunged down the crowded aisle aimlessly, while she hurried after him, and they were away out in the white, silent country before either spoke.

"I'm going back to Kishikoquillas to-morrow," the girl ventured.

"How?" said Robert absently.

"I said I'm going back to Kishikoquillas to-morrow," the girl answered.

"Oh," said he, "that will be nice. How was it that last piece run?" He pointed to the moon with his whip. "Shall we breast the ripples and the pools, swimmin' up stream, never heedin' the countless pur'ls, till at last we reach

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that high point whence the river comes, and, lookin' away, surveys the world?"

Most women have to float down the river of Time, anyway; so Viola was not much interested in the problem of swimming up stream.

"I like it so much in East Harmons ville," she said. "It's a lovely place."

"It's so slow and out o' the way," returned Robert. "What was it Tangerian said? It run like this—don't you mind?—'I, too, would sleep away my life amid some sylvan scene; I, too, would wander ever amid the fields of golden posies and along the silver streams, but ever in my breast I hear a call.'"

"Well, how nice any place is depends who else is there," the girl said softly.

Robert was worried. He brought his whip down from the moon to the back of his horse, sending the animal ahead with redoubled speed towards home and safety. Robert was wary too.

"That's so," he said. "But don't you mind how Tangerian told about leavin' his home in the Carpathian Mountains, sayin' good-bye to his mother and father and all them Turkish

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brothers and sisters, in answer to the call? That was elegant, wasn't it?"

"It was beautiful," the girl answered feebly.

She was eying him so curiously, so gently that for the moment he almost forgot the ladder to success; he almost forgot the converted Turk and his inspiration; he almost plunged head-foremost into the mire of Failure. But he braced himself. He was breasting an angry rapid, he said to himself, and he struck out with his arm and the whip came down on the horse's back again.

To Robert Twoller those seven miles seemed endless. To Viola Cooper they flashed by. To the horse the master had gone mad, urging him on this way, ceaselessly sawing at the bit, with the whip always cruelly thrashing. And there was no rest, up hill or down, until they jingled into the village and drew up before the Hannaberrys' house, where Viola was staying. There she left them, and the panting horse, with reins dragging loose, walked home to his stable.

Ambition moves the world, Tangerian said. But when ambition has slept all night after a drive of seven miles in zero weather, when it

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awakens to be confronted with ice in the pitcher and fires unlighted, its ardor is likely to be cooled. The Reverend Waldo, in his comfortable home in Spring Garden Street, could mentally soar. Robert Twoller, shivering in his room before that ice-capped pitcher, had but one ambition, and that was a furnace-heated house. And this was the day he was to begin to climb! He mounted the first rung in the ladder by getting warm. On the second rung he paused to eat his breakfast. There seemed to be no other rungs above him. Just how to go on climbing was a problem. He smoked his Sunday-morning pipe and thought it all over. If he had a furnace-heated house he would not know the joy of thawing out before a ten-plate stove. He began to suspect that the converted Turk had misled him. After all there might be some comfortable perches lower down the ladder where one could rest in peace; there might be some delectable island in that wondrous river where one could tarry in comfort, little harmed by the swirling eddies; there might be——

Outside sleigh-bells were sounding. He ran

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to the window and peered through the frosted glass, to see Viola Cooper, with her fat horse and Dunkard sleigh, jogging away from his life forever, back to the rolling fields of Kishikoquillas, that land of plenty.

The fat horse was a slow horse, and in a minute Robert was abreast of him.

"Where are you going?" he demanded of the girl when she had reined up.

"I'm going back to Kishikoquillas," said she. "And you?"

"I'm startin' to-day to climb the ladder of suck-cess," the young man answered, smiling; "but I can't find the first rung. I'm lookin' for a rung."

"And what will you do with a rung?" the girl asked, not comprehending.

"If I hadn't a-ketched you I'd 'a' used it on the converted Turk," said Robert solemnly. "But I've ketched you, and there's somethin' I wanted to say—somethin' I'd 'a' sayd last night if it hadn't 'a' been for Tangerian. I wanted to say——"

The eyes of the village were wide open. Robert saw that.

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"Mebbe," said he, "you wouldn't mind drivin' up the road a piece and 'round the bend. I'll foller."

Rare is woman's intuition! The fat horse jogged around the bend, but so heavy was his gait that when he halted Robert was leaning into the sleigh.

"Last night, Viola Kate," he said, "I'd an idee I'd like to climb the ladder of suck-cess, but it seems to me now like there might be some comfortable places to set lower down—if you've some one to set with you."

"There might," the girl said.

And she looked away over the glistening fields. That gave him heart, for he knew that when a woman looked you in the eye you should tremble.

"Last night," said he, "I thought I'd like to work and study and be a great man like Tangerian; but to-day I'm satisfied to go on just a plain Bachelor of Elements."

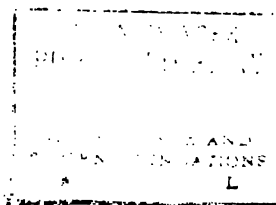
"I tho't last night you'd always be a bachelor," the girl said.

"I can't help that," said he. "Airy Grove Normal gave me that degree; but I'll be a married man, too—if you don't mind."



Drawn by Fletcher C. Ransom.

“I thought some un might be looking!”—



A BACHELOR OF ELEMENTS

"I don't mind," the girl said.

Who now cares for success? Robert does not. Tangerian is forgotten. The river of Time can flow on. The ladder can reach to heaven, but he need not climb it. For one brief moment he knows what heaven is. Then suddenly he straightens up and looks sharply around.

"What's the matter?" cries the girl.

"I thought some 'un might be lookin'," he answers.

THE MAN WHO STUDIED CONTINUAL

HE spoke from a pile of wheels in a corner of the shop, with the voice of authority that became the wisest man in all the valley. There was none to dispute him. The blacksmith would look up from the horse's hoof at which he was working and would wag his head sagely, and when the weary animal showed signs of impatience he was calmed by an admonition gently spoken. At the bellows the helper stood, so softly blowing that the fire purred, and when once he broke the story's thread by a wild ring of the anvil disapproving eyes met his from every side, and he tossed the glowing shoe into the tub, and, turning to the forge, made a feint of working, but listened.

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If you observe you will notice that them as has studied and knows everything allus holds that life is not worth living. Only those folks is happy that don't know any better, and the

THE MAN WHO STUDIED CONTINUAL

more a man knows the more unhappier he gets. Now, I'm not against studying. I have allus been a student and hold that it is every man's duty to know all he can in this world, as there is no telling what he will be called on to do in the next. Still, I don't know everything, since I have spent so much time fishing and shooting, and I can say truthful that I have spells of peace and comfort that equals the happiness of the most ignorantest. The most unhappiest man I ever see was Peter Pottipher, who lived in the mountains back of Harmony. He studied continual and knowd everything. There wasn't a book in the walley he hadn't read; there wasn't a hymn he couldn't sing by heart; and as for ketching him, he simply never was ketched. Yet he never looked glad.

Now, I mind once when I was coming home from fishing in the big run, I see the old man setting on the front-stoop of his house meditating, and I stopped in to pass the time of day. His eyes was fixed on a big white cloud that was floating over the ridge; and he was so quiet that the smoke hung to the bowl of his pipe like

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cotton; and he was so busy that when spoke to he made no answer. So I shook him.

"Peter," says I, "what are you figgering on now?"

He pointed to the sky wery solemn. "You see the Injun's head at the fur end of that cloud," he says. "Well, I'm trying to study out how many miles it is from where I'm setting to the p'int of the nose."

"That's impossible," says I, laughing.

"Mebbe," he answers, more solemn than ever. "But mind this—one end of that cloud is just over the tall pine in the clearing on the ridge; the other is even with the lime-kiln, and the distance between them two p'int is a half mile, and from here to the lime-kiln is two mile. Knowing that, it had ought to seem like there was some way of figgering the distance to the cloud itself, and that's what I've been puzzling over for an hour. It won't work out, so I guess it is impossible, else I'd have figgered it by this time."

"Of all the fool things to worry about, that beats them," says I. "S'pose you did get it, what good would it do you?"

THE MAN WHO STUDIED CONTINUAL

“Why, I’d know how fur it was,” Peter answers, rather het up.

“But the cloud won’t be there to-morrow,” I argues.

“It would be a nice thing to know now,” he says. “It makes me mad whenever I see things like that what I can’t learn.”

“As the fellow said, knowledge is power,” I ventured to remark.

“Wind-power,” said the old man, kind of sad. “That’s one of the things I found out while I was acquiring it. Look at me—me who has studied all my life and learned ’most everything, getting old and likely to die ’most any time, and all I’ll leave behind is my wife, a clearing and grandpa’s rifle. The facts I’ve got together won’t be of any use to my widder. Why, if I started to give ’em to her she just wouldn’t listen.”

“You mowt write ’em down on paper, Peter,” I says.

At that old Pottipher laughed like he would die. “Write ’em down—the idee!” says hewhen he could speak audible. “Don’t you understand that if I tried to write down all I knowd

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I'd have to live over a hundred year to finish up?"

"Well, since it won't do you any good," I asks, "why are you bothering about how fur you are from that cloud?"

Peter he smoked quiet like and studied. Then after a bit he says: "Knowing is a habit. If a man has brains, the more he puts into 'em the more they demands. The other day I seen in the county paper the figgers telling how fur we are from the sun. It didn't say how it was found out, but I judge it took a heap of studying and squinting and sighting and calculating. What good does it do us to know how many miles it is to the sun if we ain't intending to walk it? Not a bit; yet it's a nice thing to know."

"Which goes to prove," says I, "that knowledge is a luxury, not a ne-cessity."

"Exact," says Peter.

"So the most ignorantest man can get rich in dollars while the most smartest is gathering only interesting facts," says I.

"Pre-cise," says Peter; "you've studied some yourself."

THE MAN WHO STUDIED CONTINUAL

"Some," I answers, "but not too much, as I prefer the happy mejum. When I see you figgering over clouds I am more concided than ever that ignorance is bliss, as the fellow says."

With that I picked up my string of trout and left him setting there meditating.

I didn't see Peter Pottipher again for a long time, as he only come down to Harmony to Sunday-school, and when the winter set in the roads got very bad and he was snowed up. Once I did see him after that—just once—in November, when we run a fox clean over the ridge and down into the gut and up the mountain by his clearing. He heard the dogs go through his patch and come out. So I stopped a while and chatted like.

"Well, Peter," I asks, "what are you figgering on now?"

"A most interesting problem," he answers, brightening up. "Most interesting. Me and old Davy Holler, who lives a mile up the gut, is calculating how fur the Israelites travelled in the wilderness."

"That would be a nice thing to know," says I.

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"And the beauty of it is," says Peter, "it is something that nobody knows. The last time I was down to Sunday-school, before the bad weather set in, Squire Bellus asked our class that very question and nobody knowd, not even the squire himself. So coming home me and Davy put our heads together and agreed we'd figger it out during the winter."

"Don't the Good Book tell it?" I says. "If I mind correct, it tells the number of cupids they went each day, and multiplying that by forty years you should get the required result."

"Not at all," says old Pottipher. "It doesn't give it in either miles or cupids. We thought it would be easy, too, but when we got started we soon see that we would be occupied every night all winter, for if you look up you'll find how the Good Book will say in one place that they went on a three days' journey, and in another how they come unto Elim; so, when you don't know where Elim is, it is certainly puzzling."

"You had ought to have a map," I ventures.

"We have," says Peter. "Davy got one of

THE MAN WHO STUDIED CONTINUAL

Asia, but it don't give any of the places mentioned, only the Red Sea."

"Mebbe this map's too old," I says, just jokin'.

"Mebbe," says Peter, he being the most innocentest man I ever see, as well as the most knowing. "It certainly do look it. We can hardly read the print. Davy he argues that the places mentioned in the Good Book might be where the holes is in the map."

"Probable," says I, "but, such being the case, how in the name of common sense are you working it out?"

"It is difficult," says the old man, very cheerful. "We have patience. We're making a map ourself, and we will get at it gradual. You see Davy he reads 'They went three days into the wilderness.' Down I put it, making a line three days long. 'Then,' says Davy, reading on, 'they come unto Elim.' Another line is hooked on, only I mark it 'to Elim.' So there we will have it all pictured, and to get the result we only have to find out how far it is from Elim to the next p'int, and so on, and add it all up. We are getting along fine with it and I allow we'll

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give the squire a surprise when he asks that question agin."

"He'll be the most surprisedest man in Harmony," says I, never hesitating.

Just then the dogs come running back, in full cry, and I grabbed my gun and made for the road, and up the hill, to ketch a shot at the fox; so I didn't see Peter Pottipher again. I never seen him again. The snow fell wery heavy next day, and, as he couldn't come down to town, I forgot all about him, and kept on in my own quiet, ignorant way of working some and thinking some and being half happy. But one day in May—I think it was May, and a Sunday—I see Davy Holler walking down the street, and, he bringing Peter to mind, I stepped to the gate and hailed him. Now, Davy Holler, he was a wery nice old man, not so smart as Peter Pottipher, and therefore much richer, but also considerable of a student. If he was a student we had ought to speak of Peter as a professor, for I never seen one man look admiringer at another than old Holler on old Pottipher, and when you wanted to ask the one about the other you had to go delicayte.

THE MAN WHO STUDIED CONTINUAL

So says I, pleasant-like, "Well, Davy," I says, "how fur did the children of Israel travel in the wilderness?"

The old man give a start and stared at me vacant—so vacant that I shouted it at him, and he just stood there scratching his chin solemn. I repeated it again. Then he come and leaned on the gate, and borrowed a pipe of tobacco and smoked melancholy.

"It will never be knowd," he said at last, sighing.

"All your winter's work gone for nothing," said I, sympathizing.

"Absolute nothing," he answered, still melancholier. "I don't think that two men lives who will be willing to put in the work me and Peter did on that problem."

"And get no result," said I.

"But it can be figgered," said he. "If any-buddy wants to try it, I will loan 'em our map."

With that Davy pulled out a big piece of wrapping paper and hung it on the fence. I must admit it was the most remarkable hand-drawing I ever see.

"That spot is the Red Sea," says he, p'inting

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with his walking-stick. "That line shooting off shows the first movement!"

I put on my spectacles and getting close down, made out in old Peter's handwrite: "3 days—Marah." The line come zigzagging back, and over it was wrote, "Marah to Elim."

"See here, Davy," I says, "you don't mean to tell me them Israelites started right back to the Red Sea?"

The old man laughed superior-like. "Not at all," he answers, wery grand. "This ain't that kind of a map. You mind how the line zigzags all the way down to the bottom of the wrapping paper, and besides there is more on the other side. It was a monstrous amount of work, for each of them lines means a journey—sometimes it's three days—again it's four—or mebbe it just says from Dan to Beersheeby."

"A mighty queer way to Canaan," says I, not altogether understanding.

"You've never been a student," says Davy, ruther uppish. "Can't you see what it means? We finished the map, and now all that remains to be done is to find out how many miles there is in each of them zigzag lines, and, adding 'em

THE MAN WHO STUDIED CONTINUAL

we'll get the entire distance travelled by the children of Israel."

"What's the result?" I asks.

"It will never be knowd," says Davy, wery solemn. "Peter he could 'a' worked it out, but it's beyond me. Peter he was a wonderful man."

Peter Pottipher was a wonderful man! Them mountains may hold more like him, but not many. I had thought I knowd Peter, but when Davy Holler set down on my porch and told me about the winter's figgering and the final result, I see that I had never more than half an idee of him, after all. Nothing stopped him when he wanted facts. Night after night he and Davy worked by candle-light with the Good Book and the map. Sometimes it was hard and confusing, for they would find the children in one place without nothing being explained definite about how they got there. They'd make guesses whether it was a three days' journey or a seven, and Davy he would get discouraged, but old Peter he explained how it was bound to come out all right, for, while they was likely to gness too much once, the next time they would likely

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guess too little, and even up. Nothing ever scared Peter Pottipher. They kept right at it till one night in April, when the snow was all gone, and Peter's wife was setting by the fire untangling fishing lines, and Peter and Davy was working by the candle. Then Peter closed the Good Book wery gentle, and says, p'inting to the map: "Davy, that spot is the River Jordan. We have figgered it all out, and as soon as we add up, something will be knowd that was never knowd before."

"Well, begin adding," says Davy, most innocent.

That made Peter laugh hearty. "Don't you know, Davy," says he, "we can't add 'three days' journey' to the line marked 'Marah to Elim'?"

"Have we worked all winter for nothing?" cries Davy, indignant.

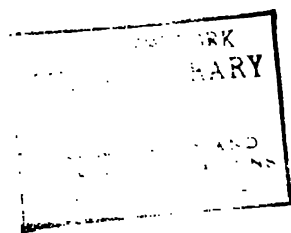
"Not at all," says Peter, in his calm way. "We must first reduce to miles."

That sounded easy, but for four days Peter Pottipher and Davy Holler was puzzled complete. Davy he was ready to give up, but Peter wasn't that kind. "Never," says he.



Drawn by Henry J. Peck.

He and Davy worked by candle-light with the Good Book
and the map.



THE MAN WHO STUDIED CONTINUAL

"Let me study." And study he did, setting on the wood-pile and watching the clouds till the fifth day, when he arose with a smile and walked up the gut to Holler's clearing.

"I have it," says he, triumphant. "We will make a three days' journey to find out how long the first line is."

Davy's eyes opened wide. He almost cried. "Do we have to wander in the mountains for a seven-day spell, too, and a forty and such?" says he. "Do we have to do everything them lines says to get the answer?"

"Not at all," says Peter, most condescending. "You are a fine fellow, Davy, but not much of a student. See here—we will journey for three days, and dividing the result by three gives how fur the Israelites could go in one day; so, by multiplying, we can fill in all the lines where the Good Pook gives the number of days travel."

"But how about them marked 'Marah to Elim,' and 'Dan to Beersheeby'?" inquires Davy, a little het up.

"One thing at a time and that well," Peter answers, quiet but determined. "That's a

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bridge I'll cross when I come to it. I've studied this out, and I allow I can study that out too. To-morrow at sun-up you'll see me here."

Davy Holler was terrible put out. He said he was getting too old for a three days' tramp. It wasn't any use to argue with Peter Pottipher. He allowed he was five year older, and if he could stand a three days' journey Davy could. There was one thing to do, and that ended it.

"You must bring your blind mule, David," says he, in a commanding way. "The children of Israel travelled with camels, so we've got to allow for that, and not move too fast. I figger from the pickters I've seen of them humpy animals they could go at just about the same gait as your old Jimmy."

Pleading, complaining, threatening — they was all of no account. Peter Pottipher was after knowledge, and nothing would turn him. He paid no attention.

"At sun-up we start, David," says he.

With that he went down the road towards home.

THE MAN WHO STUDIED CONTINUAL

As I have said, there never was a man who looked admiring on another than Davy Holler did on Peter Pottipher, and, though he wasn't wery pleased at setting off on a long journey at his age, he trusted Peter implicit, and he didn't want to see his old friend going away alone, when go he would if there was any knowledge to be got. So he was out at sun-up as ordered and ready, with the blind mule loadened with a bag of bread and pork. Peter was on hand to the minute. After taking the time most careful, the two of 'em turned to the wilderness, as the Good Book would say, journeying even unto Snyder County. At sunset on the third day they found themselves on a rocky road at the top of the fifth mountain, both of 'em wore out complete. Davy, though the youngest, was the most beat, and set down on a stump and lighted his pipe, and rubbed his shins, and groaned. Peter must have been as tired, but he was fuller of grit, and limped around till he found some pasture for the mule, then lit the fire and started some supper frying.

"Cheer up, Davy," he says real cheerful when the things was sizzling in the pan. "Cheer

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up. Our three days' journey has ended, and now we can go back home and figger."

"How fur have we come?" says Davy, rather grumpy.

Peter he rose up and looked around wery solemn. There was five mountains between him and home and one between him and Snyder County—not a house or a living thing in sight.

"Mighty souls!" he says.

"How fur is it?" says Davy again, smoking continual.

"We will have to ask some un," Peter answers, somewhat meeker.

"Who'll you ask?" says Davy, getting angrier.

"Can't you let me study a while?" Peter says, wery gentle, bringing over a pan of supper. "You eat good, Davy, and lay down and sleep like and I'll calculate."

There was some rumbling and growling, and then Davy Holler done what he was told, for he was too tired to complain wery much. Even if he was put out at Peter, he really trusted him implicit; so it wasn't long till he had forgot

THE MAN WHO STUDIED CONTINUAL

all about the children of Israel and their journeying. At sunrise he awoke—alone. The mule was there still, browsing 'round, but Peter was gone. He called, but there was no sign; so he set down and waited, knowing that a man of such uncommon learning had not disappeared for nothing. Till noon he set, smoking and meditating and whittling, and final he hear foot-steps coming up the mountain. A call brought no answer, and, being too tired to get up, he just kind of stretched his neck and set listening and watching. Feebler and feebler the foot-steps sounded—then a loud breathing. Peter come—Peter looking nearer ninety-five than eighty—Peter puffing wery hard—Peter all white and haggard like. He didn't say nothing—just set down and gasped.

“Well,” says Davy, “how fur did we come in three days?”

“Twenty-one mile,” says the old man, brightening up, kind of sad.

For a minute Davy worked his lips and fingers.

“Showing we could do seven mile a day,” he says.

SIX STARS

Peter nodded.

"How did you study it out?" says Davy.

Peter would have blushed, only he was so old and yellow, but he was truthful, and confessed.

"Yonder is Airy Grove," he says, pointing to the last mountain. "I went over in the night and asked. It's twenty-nine mile by the road from there to Harmony, and five mile from here to there, and three mile from Harmony to your clearing. The gentleman in the store figgered out early this morning for me. It's twenty-one mile."

"You're a wonderful student, Peter," Davy says.

The old man kind of smiled his thanks and leaned back against a tree. In a minute he too had forgot about the children of Israel. Davy set still for a wery long time, watching him and smoking and meditating. By and by an idee come to him, and he begin working his lips and fingers. Then he peeked at Peter, sleeping gentle like and at the sun, still high up over the mountain.

"Peter," he says.

THE MAN WHO STUDIED CONTINUAL

Peter made no sign, so he got up onrastleless, and begin to walk up and down, nervous like, watching the afternoon go by, till he couldn't stand it no more."

"Peter," he says, shaking him. The old man opened his eyes and woke up. "Peter," Davy went on, "I've been studying, and I can't make out why we couldn't have figgered how fur the Israelites travelled by walking one day and multiplying the result, just as well as by walking three and dividing."

Peter only smiled weary like and closed his eyes, so Davy didn't bother him no more till the sun was well down the other side of the mountain.

"See here," he says, shaking the sleeper wery hard, "I've been studying, Peter, and I make out that again we get home we will have journeyed six days instead of three."

But Peter never opened his eyes. Davy Holler shook him harder, but he couldn't wake him up.

"He just kind of slep' away, tired out with studying and walking," Davy says that Sunday morning as we set on my porch and he told

SIX STARS

about it. "Peter was a wonderful man for facts," he says, p'inting to the map, "and had he been spared we might have studied it out."

"He was a wonderful man," says I, unhesitating. "He took all his facts with him and left nothing behind."

"Only his clearing," Davy says, "and his widder and his grandpa's rifle."

MUSIC HATH CHARMS

HE spoke from the counter one rainy afternoon, as he lay stretched out lazily, with his back against a pile of calico rolls. The store half feared him, for a hundred combats of wits had taught it not to cross this man, who had been everywhere and seen everything, and knew the world as others knew the village and the valley. And when he leaned back this way, and knocked the ashes from his pipe, and looked searchingly into the dark recesses of the ceiling, the store saw that he was delving around the great treasure-house of his mind, and that, were it silent, it could partake of the richness of his experience. So it smoked in silence and listened.

.

Music hath charms to soothe the savage beast. I think you'll either find that in the Good Book or the almanac, both of which is full of wisdom and too little read and heeded.

SIX STARS

Of course it don't apply to bands—anybody knows that who has tried to drive a colt through Harmony when the boys was out marching, but it do apply particular to the melodium. Now, of all musical instruments the melodium is the loveliest and most affecting, besides being the difficultest to play, as it requires the rapid operation of both the hands and feet. I have knowd melodium players as could sing at the same time, but they are scarce, mighty scarce—and it takes years of study to get the hang of it. The pi-anno is a nice instrument, but it hasn't the fine tone of the melodium; it's too full of twiddles and pilly-winks; and the keys stick in wet weather, and the strings bust, which is apt to leave vacant spots in the tunes. I know it's easier to play, as it requires only the hands, but for all-around work, from quiet, touching, feeling pieces to the regular rip-roaring old jig, give me the melodium every time.

Clara Wheedle was the nicest melodium player I ever hear. She was the musicalest girl I ever knowd, too, and the most artistic, though there was no need of it, for she was good looking, just as pretty as a pickter, with

MUSIC HATH CHARMS

gold hair and Greekan features and dreamy, distant eyes that allus seemed to be looking into the beyond. Now, most of the girls in Harmony, when I was there, was either very fleshy or very spare, and when a beautiful young thing like Clara, with an elegant figger and a voice like a bell, and a soft sigh like the wind in the trees in June, and an artistic smile, and a whole handful of diamond rings—when a dream like that come from Snyder County and settled in our midst, there wasn't an unmarried heart in town that didn't beat high with hope. She was the first artistic girl we had ever see, and she certainly was polished, having had the advantage of living in an educated center—Airy Grove, where she had taken a three months' course in the Musical Cemetary.

If I mind right, Clara Wheedle arrived in Harmony about corn-planting time, and, after a day at the National Hotel, moved over to board at old Mrs. Duple's. The first I hear of her was when, on Saturday evening, I hap-pened to see pasted on the store window a notice in a strange handwrite, which announced that Miss Clara Wheedle had arrived at Mrs. Dum-

SIX STARS

ple's and would give lessons, vocal, melodium, pi-anno, or brass and sight reading, for fifty cents apiece. Further, it stated that she had gradeated at the Airy Grove Cemetary with honors; had been organist at the Methodist Church at Pummelsville, Pa.; Professor of Music at the Barktown Soldiers' Orphan School, besides having organized numerous cantatas and singing societies. With a history like that behind her, I had expected naturally to see a regular dried-up music teacher. Not at all. She bursted on me at church next morning, a vision of loveliness as she set at the melodium playing, and from that minute my whole plan of life seemed changed. You had otter seen Clara Wheedle as she led the anthem, playing the melodium and singing at the same time, all the while her eyes fixed on the ceiling like she was being carried away by the beauty of it. She was a perfect painting, and it struck me all in a heap, which is saying a good deal, as I had allus been most popular with the fair sect, and had refused about every girl in town.

I can say honest that Clara Wheedle was the only girl I ever loved, though I've since mar-

MUSIC HATH CHARMS

ried. No man ever loves more than oncet, for love is like the mumps, oncet you've had it you don't get it again. The symptoms is loss of sleep and appetite, a stuffy feeling in the chest and thoughts of suicide when you see Her making eyes at the other fellow. If you marry Her you recover, and affection takes its place, the appetite comes back, you smoke like a chimbley and look forward with dread to dying—perhaps. If you don't marry Her, you get over it just the same, and you never really love again. The next time you meet a lady you may concide that you are suited to each other, but you won't suffer the way you done at first, because you know better. So when I seen Clara Wheedle leading that anthem—I think it was “Bringing in the Sheaves”—I said to myself that here was the girl for me, life without her would not be worth living, and if she would not have me I would end all. The very next day I agreed to take ten lessons on the melodium.

The really happiest hour I ever had in all my life was that first lesson, when we set side by side in the Dumps' parlor, my eyes glued to them ivory keys, my fingers getting all tangled

SIX STARS

up and ontwisted, and she waving her pencil and saying, "Now—one—two—three—one—two—three—one—two—three." Sometimes I'd try to stop, and look at her kind of languishing, and rub my knuckles and make a remark about the weather, but she was all business, and would shut me right off with that infernal, "Now—one—two—three—one—two—three—one—two—three—one—two—three." And when we finished, and I was inclined to set around a while, she says, opening the door very bland, "That will do to-day. To-morrow at eleven." So I went out in kind of a daze—so dazed that it did not strike me as peculiar when I see old Erastus Melon, a tri-widower, in the hall hugging a bass-horn, waiting his turn.

A while later, in a chair on my porch, in the sun, thinking of her, I could hear the boom—boom—boom of Erastus Melon's bass-horn, and it kind of kept pounding it into my head that it was queer that a fellow like him whose whole life had been spent on the store porch should suddenly begin to develop such like artistic tastes. But I set it down that he wanted to join the band on account of the uniform, and

MUSIC HATH CHARMS

I tried to forget the noise and give myself up to thoughts of Her, of the time when she was to be mine, and I was to lean back in the rocker and close my eyes and listen while she played sentimental pieces on the melodium and cornet. The booming stopped so sudden after I'd got used to it that I woke up, to see Ossy Dinkle hurrying up the street like he was late, carrying under his arm a brand-new guitar. Lily Looney, who had been keeping company with him for about three years, see him, and run out of their house, calling to him; but he just waved her aside and hurried on; and a few minutes later, through the Dumbles' window, come a tum—tum—tum—tumpety—tum—tum that set me thinking.

The guitar is purely a sentimental instrument. I never hear a married man play one, and I knowd well enough that a fellow who was naturally so lazy as Ossy Dinkle wasn't going to tire his fingers just for the love of music. Ossy had in his soul about as much art as a guinea-hen, and, though he belonged to the band, he had never rose above the bass-drum, so it didn't take much figgering on my

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part to see how as he was playing the same game as me and old Erastus Melon. But I didn't worry. Of them two I had nothing to be afraid, for not only was it generally admitted that I was the handsomest man in Harmony, but, besides, I was the tastiest dresser, and then mother had a pension. But young Oriole Jackson was richer than me, and J. Thomas Wackle had a normal school education, and Llewellyn Lilly a heavenly disposition. When I see them, one after another, go into Dumpsles', one with a cornet, another with a fiddle, and the last with just his voice and a roll of music, I begin to worry. Truly, competition is the life of love. The worse the competition got, the worse I got, the less I e't, the less I slept and smoked, and the stuffier I felt in the chest. And as I suffered so suffered the whole town of Harmony, excepting the weemen and the old men.

You have no idea of the influence of a be-yutiful woman. The place was changed. The store was deserted, and on Sundays the church was so crowded that it seemed like the meeting was specially for men, which the Reverent

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Spiegel nail laid entirely to his preaching, so he made his sermons a half hour longer in response to what he believed the popular demand. But church was worth it, in spite of them sermons. Miss Wheedle had put her eight singing pupils in the choir, besides having two female voices, and the way the men sung anthems was a pleasure to see. She would lead 'em, setting at the melodium, her fingers feathering over the keys, the diamonds flashing, her face upturned like, her eyes gazing into the beyond, she singing like a nightingale, the choir follering after and in the back of the church three whole pews full of young men joining in. The preacher declared it the greatest revival of religious interest that Harmony ever see.

It had been that in the evenings the boys was mostly around the square, setting in the store porch, or pitching quoits, or playing sock-ball. But after the artistic movement struck the place the square was as quiet as a graveyard. And if after supper you took a walk through town, you'd hear, coming out of Melons' parlor, the boom-boom of the bass-horn, as Erastus blewed

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sentimental pieces; you'd go on by Dinkles' and see Ossy on the porch, twanging "Tell Me, Darling," out of his guitar; you'd come to Jackson's and find Oriole on the pump-trough, tenderly breathing "Annie Laurie" through his cornet; while next door J. Thomas Wackle's fiddle was whining the feeling strains of "Little Nellie Gray, They Have Taken Her Away," and further down the street Lewellyn Lilly was do-ra-me-sofalalling like a dog at the moon. And they wasn't the only ones. As I said, the whole male sect of the place was music-mad, while the women generally was of the opinion that that Wheedle girl was the plainest thing, with the poorest voice and the big-feelingest, conceitedest ways they ever see.

Of course such like conditions could not keep up forever, and when the gentle sect began to make things most unpleasant around a hundred homes, there was a general rush to capture the cause of all the trouble. I was about the first to try to end it. I had pined away to one hundred and thirty pounds, and had wore my fingers down considerable playing the melodium, and mother had become most uncommon

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het up. So one day at my lesson I stopped plum in the middle of a bar, turned square around and told Clara Wheedle. You never see a sweeter smile than she give me.

“I am so sorry,” she says. “But you know I am wedded to my art. But let it make no difference. I shall be a teacher to you just the same. Now, one—two—three—one—two—three—one—two—three.”

My music went out of the window and I went out of the door. But after I'd taken a look at the milldam, I concluded I had been too hasty, and that faint heart never won fair lady, and all that; so next day I was back again at the melodium with her a-counting serenely over my shoulder.

Of course I kept quiet about it all, but I see by old Erastus Melon's face, and Ossy Dinkle's week in the mountains, and J. Thomas Wackle's swearing how wedded she was to her art. But it did seem like the more wedded she was the more artistic we all become and the more determineder to be worthy of her. We was getting to a high state of perfection when there come one day to the National Hotel the homeliest

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man I ever see. He called himself Jake O'Brien, the boy John L. Sullivan, for, though he was only twenty-seven years old, he was champeen feather-weight of Snyder County. Such a face I never hope to look upon again. It all seemed to have been turned around, and when he smiled at you pleasant-like you'd run for your gun. He had come down for a few weeks' quiet training for a match with the Young Whirlwind of Perry County, and had a gentleman-friend with him to take away his seegars when he lighted them, and keep his flask empty, and rub him down every day after he had run twenty-five miles in the boiling sun. Then the two of 'em would stroll up and down the street like they owned the town.

But the town was against them. The artistic movement in Harmony was at its height, and it wasn't considered good taste to speak to such brutal creatures, excepting for small boys, and even the colored cook in the hotel objected to eating at the same table with them.

But you can't tell about weemen. I know about as much about them as anybody living, and I long ago concided that their brains was

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worked by the winds. You'd think a beautiful woman would want a handsome husband; but if you notice, you'll observe that handsome men allus marries plain weemen—my wife was plain. I did not realize it in them days in Harmony, though. So one afternoon old Erastus Melon come flying out the Dumps' front door and landed in the flower-bed, and when I see his bass-horn land on top of him I slicked up my hair and put on a tie and says: "Now is my time. The contrast will do it."

So, proud and hopeful, I stepped across the road and up on the porch. Then I hear sounds in the parlor, and I stopped a minute to listen.

"Clara," came in a voice that sounded like it had been filed, "Clara, I have swore for your sake to knock the stuffin' outen that whirlwind fakir. I have swore it, Clara."

"Oh! my hero!" says she, in her bell-likest, languishingest tones, "my hero, how I wish I could witness your victory!"

Mad! I was that het up I lost my senses, and didn't have no fear. I stuck my head in the window and glared right at them as they set there on the piano-stool, the two of 'em.

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“Well, Clara Wheedle,” I says, “if that’s what you call the art you’re wedded to, I’ll give up music.”

Then I run. I didn’t stop till I got well out of town, and I didn’t go home till after dark. But I never played the melodium no more, beautiful instru-ment though it be.

THE MOST DETERMINEDEST MAN

HE was sitting on the anvil in the blacksmith-shop, his fish-pole resting at his side, his eyes contemplating a single trout hanging dejectedly on the hickory twig that he held in his hand.

To fish proper you must be determined. Now, I never was determined. Had I been, you can bet that I'd had more success in this life. But I live just the same as I fish, going forth in the morning with a rod and a can of worms, my mind made up that I won't come home till I've got a whole string. My determination kind of lasts for just one trout, and then, if they ain't biting good, I get discouraged and give it up. It must be because I'm intellectual. Now, I've studied a heap in this world, but I've never done nothing, being a student. I've been 'most everywhere and seen 'most everything, and come in contact with all kinds, classes and conditions

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of people, and I've noticed that, with only a few exceptions, intellectuality and worldly prosperity never goes hand in hand. C. Jimison Johnson, who taught school up to Harmony, was one of them exceptions, for he became County Superintendent of Schools and got a thousand a year; but, speaking generally, a fellow with a brain full of idees is like a gun loaded with buckshot, and birdshot, and nails, and tacks—when it's fired, if it don't burst, it just brings down leaves and twigs, while a single bullet goes straight and funder, and kills. So, you see, determination is to the mind what the powder is to the rifle.

The most determinedest man I ever knowd was Shadrach Dinkle, a cousin of Ossy Dinkle, and also, on his ma's side, related by marriage to Percy Berry, who lived the life beautiful. And, bein' the most determinedest, he was one of the most small men I ever see, for if you'll notice, you observe that the more littler a man is the more determineder he is.

"I'm little," Shadrach used to say, "but I'm mighty."

He was mighty. There was nothing that

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fellow couldn't do, simply because he was so determined. Oncet he made up his mind to have a thing there was no peace in town till he got it. He was born rich, and with an income of \$500 a year there was no use of his trying to pile up more wealth, so he went in for glory. He made up his mind he would be a school director when he was twenty-one, and we had no rest till we elected him. Likewise when he wanted to be road-supervisor and squire. By the time he was thirty he had been 'most everything a man could be that was worth being. He had never married. That wasn't because the girls wouldn't have him, because a man as rich as he was could have had 'most any of 'em without having to be determined; but so many of 'em was so determined to have him he was more determineder not to have them, and it used to give him pleasure just to prove that he was the strongest minded.

Shadrach Dinkle was little, and he was certainly mighty. Whatever he said went for truth in the town of Harmony, because if it wasn't so, we kind of had an idee it would be before long, just because he wanted it. Why, if he

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had said he had decided to move the mountain a mile or two this way or that way, there wasn't one of us around the store wouldn't have gone up on the hill to watch him do it. That they stayed where they was must have been simply because he had not made up his mind; but to move them mountains was about the only thing to be done around the walley that he had not did. Mind you, by the time he was thirty he had done all there was to do. He had been school director, supervisor and squire, and had never married. He was getting kind of down-like and discouraged, because there was no more worlds to conquer, as General Grant said, when one day there come to Harmony, from Snyder County, a beautiful Swedish lady called Nora Yonson, who was hired by the Widow Berry, she being bedrid, to nurse her and do the cooking, and take care of the garden and the general light housework. I never seen a more splendider looking woman. She was about six foot tall and built in proportion, and had gold hair and a smile, and hands as big—well, you otter have seen Nora's hands.

Now Shadrach Dinkle, coming down to store

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one day after dinner, happened to pass Widow Berry's house, and seen Nora spading up the front flower-bed. She seen him, and stood up and looked over the fence at him like he was a curiosity, as his hat just showed over the top of the palings. As for Shadrach, he looked up at her like she was a statue. For a minute them two stared. Then Miss Yonson, she not knowing that Shadrach was mighty, put those hands to her side, and leaned back and laughed and laughed like she'd die. That riled him terrible, for never in his life had he been laughed at. He spoke to her wery sharp, and she being Swedish and from Snyder County, and not understanding Pennsylvania English, fairly roared, she was so tickled. Then he yelled, to make her understand, but she only laughed louder. So he come down to store about the indignantest man I ever see. Right after him was his cousin, Ossy Dinkle, who was the greatest joshier we ever had in Harmony, and, having seen the meeting at Widow Berry's, he didn't know no better than to josh Shadrach. But Shadrach had cooled a bit and kep' his temper, and kind of smiled scornful, and smoked

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and thought. So we uns all fell to smoking and thinking, and we smoked and studied almost an hour. Then Shadrach he spoke up all of a sudden, knocking his pipe on the counter to show how his mind was made up.

"Well, boys," says he, "I've an idee."

We all looks up inquiring.

"I've determined to marry that Miss Yonson," he says, shutting his jaws with a snap and glaring at us.

Of course we all knowd then and there that when he spoke like that it was as good as a wedding, but we was kind of surprised at him, as had refused so many weemen, giving in all of a sudden.

"But, from what I seen, she won't have you," says Ossy Dinkle.

"That's just why I've determined to marry her," says Shadrach, his eyes flashing. "She laughed at me because I'm little; but she don't know that I'm mighty. She is determined not to marry me, and I'm going to show that I'm more determineder."

"But how can you show her, when she can't speak a word of Pennsylvania English?" says

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Ossy Dinkle, who had a way of allus raising objections to things that he had no interest in.

“If I was as weak-minded as you I couldn’t,” says Shadrach, wery cool. “The fact she’s Swedish makes me more determineder, for there’s something to accomplish. Besides, blessed is the man who has a wife that he can’t understand, yet who he can make understand him. Now, I’m going to start.”

With that Shadrach Dinkle got up and went to Widow Berry’s, we all a-follering a few rods away to see him begin. Miss Yonson was still spading the flower-bed, but when she seen him she straightened up and grinned so loud as we could see it away down the road. Shadrach he bowed polite-like, opened the gate, went in, set down on the porch, got out his pipe, lighted it, made himself wery comfortable with his head agin a post and smiled too. Miss Yonson was took back a minute, but then she began to laugh like she’d die; so when we come up there she was leaning on the spade, laughing and laughing so loud you could have heard it at the store, and there he was on the porch, smiling like a cat after dinner on a sunny day.

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Of course we didn't dast stand there staring, so we all wandered on by, like we was interested in something else; but, be peeking outen the corner of our eyes, we knowd well enough what the trouble was. We knowd she was laughing and he was smiling because each of 'em thought they was more determineder than the other. The game was on, but they wasn't one of us what 'ud 'a' bet a doughnut agin a dollar on that Swedish lady; but, though we knowd it was only a matter of days till Shadrach won, we give up the store in the afternoon and took to wandering up and down in front of the Widow Berry's place, kind of observing. Shadrach was allus there in the afternoon, keeping company; but it was the queerest company I ever saw kept, for she couldn't speak Pennsylvanian, and he could talk better Dog than Swedish, so he just set there smoking and smiling and watching her digging garden and weeding; and every now and then she'd have a spell of laughing. Then when it come time for her to go in and look after Widow Berry, she'd just kind of pick Shadrach up and lead him outen the yard, and give him a push

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that would send him flying towards the store—her all the time just busting with amusement, for she was the most good-humored woman I ever see.

Well, one day the follering week Shadrach Dinkle went down to see Herman Holler, and asked him to do a little interpreting, saying he had found that Miss Yonson was a very good Pennsylvania Dutch speaker. So up them two went to the Widow Berry's, and what was said I got later from my cousin, who married a sister of Herman Holler's wife, she being Luella Emily Tompkins, of Fairview.

"Tell her," says Shadrach Dinkle to Herman Holler, "tell her that I've determined to marry her; that I'm the richest man in town, having \$500 a year; that I'm small but mighty; that, as I'm the most determinedest man in the walley, she might just as well give in."

So Herman Holler he told her.

"Tell him," says Miss Yonson to Herman Holler, "tell him that I'm determined not to marry him. He's so little he makes me laugh every time I see him, and I'd never knowd he was mighty if he hadn't told me."

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That got Shadrach Dinkle so mad he couldn't speak for a minute. He shook his fist right in her face and says, says he: "Tell her," he says, "that I ain't used to being spoke that way of, and that now I'm more determineder than ever. The wedding will be to-morrow afternoon at four."

"Tell him," says Miss Yonson, "that he can't skeer me, as I've sent for my brothers for protection."

When Shadrach heard that he begin to laugh, and he got Herman Holler and pulled him outen the house, and the two of 'em come down to the store, laughing and laughing. We was all waiting, and Shadrach he give us invitations to the wedding. The idee of any woman trying to escape him oncet his mind was made up! He'd show us, he said. And the next afternoon he showed us.

We all met at the store, and at four o'clock Shadrach came along, dressed up fit to kill, in a Prince Albert coat and leading Preacher Spiegelnail. So we went, two be two, up to Widow Berry's, and to our surprise Miss Yonson she opened the door, smiling, and showed

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herself all done up lovely, with her hair frizzed and ribbons all over her. Shadrach was kind of took by surprise, and it looked like he'd turn and run, but we was pushing up behind, and into the room he went. For a minute we all stared at Miss Yonson, and she stood with her arms folded, looking back and smiling.

"Tell her," says Shadrach to Herman Holler, "that I'm here determined to marry her and have brought the preacher."

"Well, I'm all ready," said Miss Yonson, rising up, in the most excellentest Pennsylvania English. "And I'm determined to marry you."

Shadrach Dinkle he almost fainted when he heard her speak so plain. He stood on one foot and then the other; he mopped his face and almost begin to cry. Then his spirit come back, and all his strength of mind, and he begin to laugh.

"Gentlemen," says he, turning to us, "you see I have kept my word and won the lady who was determined not to marry me. It's no use of this thing going any further since I've

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proved what determination can do. We'll go back to the store and have se-gars."

"Wait till you see my brothers," says Miss Yonson, and then she calls, "Schon! Chake!"

The kitchen door opened, and in come the two most largest men I ever set eyes on, and stands there, looking at Shadrach wery solemn, like they'd eat him.

"You'll give me away, Chake," says Miss Yonson, "and you, Schon, will keep the gentlemen from getting out."

With that she wrapped that big hand of hers around Shadrach Dinkle's, and, turning to the preacher, says, says she, "You may proceed, Mr. Spiegelnail."

Now, had we had anything to say then I don't think we'd have objected to having Shadrach Dinkle ketched that way, for we was really getting tired of his determined ways; tired of his allus being right and allus doing everything well and never being beat, and it seemed a mighty good lesson to him to be married. But we never had any chance to say nothing; between them most largest brothers and that most determinedest woman. The preacher he kind of

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gasped, but she give him one look and he didn't hesitate any more. Shadrach he hesitated once only, just once, and in one minute it was all over with him.

Shadrach Dinkle he was never the same agin, and it was a blessing—a public blessing. From the most determinedest man I ever see he become the hesitatingest, and seemed to be glad he was allowed to live. Just the other day I seen him going through town with his two youngest daughters, both of 'em nearly six feet and built in proportion, both of 'em setting on the seat of the buggy, but him squeezed in behind, with his legs dangling out most pathetic.

THE UPLIFTING POWER OF PRIDE

FROM an egg-crate on the store porch, on a day in spring when the sun was out and every man in the village who was blessed with nothing to do had gathered at the bench, he spoke of pride and its uplifting power.

If you observe, you'll notice that a balloon has to be filled with gas before it even begins to rise. People are like balloons. You see 'em fill up with pride and then they begin to go wafting higher, and higher, and higher, until we ordinary folks, moving around earth's surface, can't be told from animals. Now, the idee has long been prevailing that folks rise first and then swell; but it's wrong. It's just as wrong to suppose a balloon soars into the clouds first and fills up with gas afterwards. Sometimes balloons burst and down they come. So it is with people when the pressure of pride becomes too great—their heads kind of give

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way and they tumble to common earth again. Man's present elevation was reached by the uplifting power of pride. Without it he would still be swinging from tree to tree with his tail or eating peanuts in a zoölogical garden. You look surprised at me advancing theories that our race grew up by evil-lution. You hold, I s'pose, to the old idee that Adam and Eve was moving figures made of dust. You'll notice, if you observe, that them as knows all about what happened thousands of years before there was any reading, writing and 'rithmetic says positive that Adam and Eve just kind of come down to earth from nowhere and settled and raised the human family. Contrariwise, them that don't know anything, that aren't sure that we exist even, or that what we see is real, figgers it out that most likely men revoluted from the animals.

Now, I'm inclined to believe in evil-lution. Of course it is possible that in the creation man was made separate, but the idee of him certainly come from the monkeys. It was found out that they worked all right, then man was put up as an improvement. I say that

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is possible, but not likely. It seems more natural that we come down direct, and when we consider what pride can do we see how easy it was. The same kind of revolution goes on under our eyes every day, only we don't notice it. Look back thousands of years ago, when there wasn't any men. We see a whole monkey village in the tree-tops, all the folks chattering and swinging from limb to limb by their tails. A youth is born with a shorter tail than is the style at the time and with exceptional nice fur. His mother begins to point out how different he is from the other children, how he has such a lovely silky fur, and such sweet blue eyes, and how he has such a refined tail, none of them old-fashioned long ones that has been worn so many thousand years. Naturally the youngster gets proud. He sees he's different from the other folks around him; he begins to part his hair all the way down the middle of his back and to treat the others as if they were only poor relations. He gets kind of bored with the life and the first thing we know he moves down to the ground where he can be more alone. Pretty soon he finds that he can see better if he walks

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on his hind feet instead of all-fours, and besides it makes him more different from the others, gives him an air of distinction. Now, of course there would be no evolution if it wasn't for the gentle sect; but, looking down from the trees, they see him. "Who," says they, "is that distinguished looking chap, so proud and uppish, who walks on his hind feet and parts his hair down his back?"

You can figure it on out down to the present day. Pride done it. When a few exclusive monkeys got to living on the ground, the others followed, just to be in the swim. Walking upright became the style and tails went entirely out of fashion when they weren't needed any longer for swings. Pride kept on working. The ground got common as a dwelling-place, and houses were the fashion, being exclusive, though, for my part, I can't see but what a nice leafy limb, with the proper amount of spring to it, is about as good a place as one could ask to live, if he was used to it. Trouble kept on piling up. Clothes come in style, the ancestor of the present elegant Prince Albert being nothing less than a simple garment of homespun

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leaves. The fur all wore off, and then some idiot finished up the destruction by introducing the habit of shaving.

Pride done it. Pride raised up the human race from its humble, happy, chattering life among the trees. Pride brought us out of that simple state to our present greatness. It give us striped shirts, Prince Alberts, pi-annos, parlors, plush furniture, crayon portraits, ice-cream freezers—a thousand and one appendixes of civilization, that have complicated life till we actually have debates as to whether it is worth living. We hold ourselves high above the dog because he can't play the pi-anno—as if he wanted to—as if he'd be any happier if he could.

All of this leads me up to Octavia Simpkins Tooney, who lives in Pleasantville to-day, under her husband's name, and has allus seemed to me a splendid example of pride's uplifting power. I went to school in Harmony with Octavia Simpkins Tooney; only we knowd her then as plain Tavvy Tooney, a nice, simple, little thing, who would have been better looking if she hadn't squinted. She was dead common

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then and was a good friend of me and Ossy Dinkle and Welly Wackle and all the boys of our set, and spoke to us all by our nicknames most friendly like, and sometimes we'd call her Squint for short, and she never minded it at all. We all kind of figgered her as one of us and liked her first-rate, though she wasn't the kind of girl you'd run after very hard to kiss when you was playing "Ring Around the Rosy," like you would Luella Tompkins, who had yeller hair and blue eyes. "Oh, no," you'd say, "it's only Squint Tooney," and you wouldn't bother. She wasn't smart. She could just about read, that was all; and when you told her a joke she would look at you solemn for five minutes, and then say, "Well?" She wasn't rich. Her pa died and left her too much money for her to live in the country and too little to live in a real town. So she stayed in Harmony. "Poor Tavvy Tooney!" everybody used to say, "she's plain, she's stupid and hasn't much money or any prospects; nothing but good nature."

That shows how folks misjudge—how little they really know. Tavvy was about eighteen

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when her pa died, and she was so upset by the sad event that she had to take some of his life insurance and spend a month in Philadelphia and another at Atlantic City. In the fall she came back, bringing with her a young lady friend. I mind that day well. Walking down the street from the store one afternoon, dressed in my regular clothes, I see two strange weemen approaching. I come to a stop and rubbed my eyes and stared till I made out one to be Tavvy Tooney, but I wouldn't 'a' been sure only she squinted so hard at me. She had a straw hat, tipped to one side, and her hair hung in a loose bunch behind, and her nose was decorated with a pair of eye-glasses with a brass chain, and she was tucked in very tight at the waist, and kind of kept falling forward instead of regularly walking. Mighty! but I was glad to see her—to see old Tavvy Tooney, who had played right field in my nine when we was boys!

“Hello, Squint!” I cried, most delighted, holding out my hand, for her never to see.

“I presume you mean Miss Tooney,” says she, very cold. “If so, how do you do?”

With that she kept on right by me.

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"Who is that person, Octavia?" says the lady friend, very loud and shocked like.

"Only one of the local young men, Gwendolen," says Octavia Tooney. "You must excuse them—it's only ignorance, not natural badness of heart," she says.

Mad? I was never so mad in all my life, when I see how this plain Tavvy Tooney actually thought she was better than me. "I'll show her," I says; "I'll break her proud spirit; I'll bring her down to her knees, I will." So that very night I fixed myself all up and went to call—the first real call I had ever made on her, though I'd set up with most every girl in Harmony.

"Good-evening, Miss Tooney," says I when she opened the door.

"How do you do?" says she; "step right into the drawing-room," she says. "I want you to shake hands with my friend Miss Gwendolen Smith Pretty. Miss Pretty, you know, is a direct descendant of Captain John Smith."

"Indeed?" says I, rather surprised, for I'd knowd the Captain all my life and didn't know he had any girls; but I hadn't time to figger

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out how it was, for I had to set down and talk—or, I should say, listen—for Miss Tooney had most to say.

“I s’pose you are glad to be home again, Squint,” says I. “I mean Miss Tooney.”

She froze up for a minute. Then she answers, very calm: “Glad; why should I? Harmony’s such a dead place, I just had to bring Miss Pretty home with me for a while to keep me company. She was a dear to come, too, for she has an elegant position in a Philadelphia store. But I suppose I’ll get used to it by and by here, though there’s hardly anybody fit to associate with—hardly anybody that knows anything.”

My hair must have been standing on end, or else she caught a queer look in my eye, for she het up a bit.

“I s’pose you think it curious that I complain about people here not knowing anything,” she says. “Well, mebbe I am a poor speller and could never multiply, but there’s more things to be knowd in this world than’s found in books. Why should I have to know anything, anyway—I who was born to my position?”

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You know my pa kept the biggest store in Barktown at one time, and my grandpa, on Mother's side, was a Presbyterian preacher."

"I should think, Octavia dear," says Miss Pretty, "you'd hardly ever meet a man in a place like this that a girl with any pride would care to marry."

"Never," said Miss Tooney. "If I stayed in Harmony I should die an old maid."

I felt like saying she most likely would, but somehow I lost my courage. Them girls had made me feel as if I wasn't quite as good as they were, and I didn't want to laugh at them at all. I was real anxious to prove different; to lift myself up to them and look down with them on the others. Miss Tooney made me mad, but the madder I got the more she was on my mind, and the first thing I knowd I was crazy about her. Rhoda Sizzle she was pretty as a pickter, but what was the use of capturing her, who was just setting around, without any pride, smiling and waiting to be taken. I wanted to do something better than that. Once you feel humble you begin to get proud. I opened a regular campaign, and every evening regular

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went up to Tooneys'. And the more I went the uppishier them girls got, and the humbler I felt and the ambitionuser.

And I wasn't the only man in Harmony who was hit hard. There was Ossy Dinkle, and young Oriole Jackson, and Wellington Wackle, and a half dozen others, who was snubbed so repeated and often that they began to pine away with love.

Clara Wheedle had lovely, dreamy eyes, but we didn't find them half as fascinating as Miss Octavia Simpkins Tooney's left when she winked it at you steady for five minutes through them elegant glasses. Rhoda Sizzle's hair was like gold, and used to shine and glisten and twinkle in the lamplight, but we soon see that there was a certain style in Miss Tooney's red that the other girls couldn't get. It was what they were all wearing then in Philadelphia, Miss Pretty told us in a whisper, and we worshipped it—fairly worshipped it, Oriole Jackson even going so far as to compose a po-em, called "Blood-red Tresses." Sapphira Lime had a face—such a face, with red cheeks and dimples; but it passed from our minds once

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we really noticed the pale patrician cast that had been handed down from the Presbyterian preacher. It's wonderful what well-placed pride will do.

I mind one day, when I dropped into the store and see Ossy, and Oriole, and Lucien, and Elisha, and Wellington all setting there in silence, smoking, very down-hearted.

"Of course," says Ossy Dinkle, when he see me, "of course you are invited to meet Miss Gwendolen Smith Pretty to-morrow evening at seven?"

"Of course not," says I. "You don't suppose she'd ask *me*?"

"It's to be very select," says Oriole, melancholy. "The people are mostly coming from Barktown, and there'll be euchre and ice-cream. But I'd give anything for an invite."

"I allow she felt we wouldn't mix well with them Barktown folks," says Wellington.

"I guess she figgers that the Reverend Mr. Spiegelnail and the Doctor are about the only Harmony folks that's swell enough," says Elisha.

"We are kind of crude to her, I s'pose," says

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I, sitting down and smoking very hard and thinking it all over.

My mind was made up at last. I wasn't going to be snubbed any longer. Miss Octavia Simpkins Tooney was only Squint Tooney, after all, and I was just as good as she was, and was going to marry her. I wouldn't fool any more, but would go right up and claim her—tell her how I loved her from childhood, how that love had increased all them years she played right field on my baseball team, and how it wasn't any use for her to try to get away from it any longer. Dear old Squint!

Somehow when I got to the scene I wasn't so brave as I intended to be. Somehow I could not say, "Squint, dear," in the loving way I'd planned, just to awaken the old memories. Somehow I had to set twiddling my thumbs for nearly a half hour before I could get to the point at all.

"Miss Tooney," I began at last, "I have something I wish to say to you."

"Well, save yourself the trouble," says she, very calm and proud. "I suppose it is the same as Mr. Dinkle said last evening, and Mr.

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Wackle on Tuesday, and Mr. Jackson Sunday morning when he pressed his company on me after church."

"But, Tavvy," I began, making elegant eyes and kind of drawling it out.

"Don't Tavvy me, please," says she. "You forget who I am. My pa kept the biggest store in Barktown and my grandpa, on Mother's side, was a Presbyterian preacher. That's something you men all seem to forget. There's one thing I won't do, and that is marry beneath me."

"But I can't see but what we are about equal," says I, plaintive like.

"Equal!" says she, laughing. "A country store clerk my equal!"

"Mebbe I might work up," says I, humble like.

"But blood will out," says she. "You'll never catch me mating with country store clerks and blacksmiths and such like—never!"

Now, for a man like me, that had refused nearly every girl in Harmony, this was pretty hard; but Miss Tooney was so firm that I begin to see that she meant it. She did

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mean it. She had pride and pride only, and with that she had done what every other girl in Harmony had been trying to do for a year. Luella Tompkins had tried the hardest, and, she being at the same time the prettiest girl in town, almost succeeded. Then Miss Octavia Simpkins Tooney took a hand and gave another euchre party in January asking only Barktown folks, and leaving out especially Henry J. Jackson, a very rich commercial traveller, who was spending a week with his cousin Oriole. Of course everybody thought she would ask Henry J., he being from Pleasantville, and very handsome, and a most tasty dresser. But not her. Have a mere drummer in her house, she said, to meet the oldest families in Barktown? Never! That made Mr. Jackson so mad he forgot all about Luella Tompkins and set around the store the whole afternoon saying mean things about Miss Tooney. But when she came in to get some washing blue he got up most polite and asked if he might escort her home.

"If you insist," she answers, squinting at him very cold.

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Luella see them going up the street, Henry J. doing all the talking, Henry J. looking his handsomest, Henry J. laying himself out to be pleasing; telling her all about his family, all about his pa, who had been a captain in the militia, and his grandpa, on his mother's side, who was the leading druggist of Pleasantville. Luella was almost wild. She stood by the gate when Henry J. came back, which was very soon, for Miss Tooney never invited him in; she smiled her sweetest and looked her loveliest, but the young man just nodded and went on by, with his head hanging and kind of studying steps, for he was feeling humble, wondering what there was about him that would make a proud girl despise him so, wondering why he had always been so blind as not to know that pride fascinath a hundredfold more than mere beauty. He would show her; he would prove his worth; he would make her learn that Henry J. Jackson was something more than a mere worm to be trod on and snubbed.

When Miss Tooney sent out invites the very next week and I got one, and Oriole another—got the only ones that she sent out in Harmony,

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we cheered up most almighty. At last, we says, we are swelling. At last, we says, we are fit to meet these aristocratic Barktown folks. At last we are near the only goal in Harmony that is worth winning. But we didn't understand. We didn't know that Henry J. Jackson had been left out again especial.

He was setting in the store the afternoon of the party, thinking very hard, when I come in.

"Is it true that you and Oriole have been honored by Miss Octavia Simpkins Tooney?" he asks, rather sad.

"It is true," said I, slanting my see-gar up and blowing out smoke. "A very select affair, I believe, too."

He didn't say anything more, but, after a long while, he got up with a sigh and limped out and up the street.

That very evening when I went up to Tooneys' and rung the bell, who should open the door but Henry J. Jackson; who should say "Come in" and take my coat and hat and hang 'em on the rack; who should lead me into the parlor, right among all them swells from Barktown, lead me up to Miss Tooney, who

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was smiling dreadful? What should he say but, "Allow me to present you to my future bride."

"Impossible!" says I, not believing it even then.

"It did seem impossible at one time," says Henry J., in glad tones. "But she has stooped; she has done me the honor."

Octavia smiled again harder than ever, and held out her hand.

"I hope you will be happy, Miss Tooney," says I, as cheerful as I could.

"Oh, please don't call me Miss Tooney," says she, as sweet as you please. "Remember the dear old days when we were children together and call me Squint."

THE SENTIMENTAL MISS TUBBS

HE had balanced himself nicely on the village pump-trough, and between puffs of his pipe addressed himself to a select company of his fellow townsmen.

Sentiment is a sign of uncivilizedness. Notice a dog. I don't suppose any of you uns ever troubled to notice a dog, but if you do you will observe that there is more sentiment in the average coon-hound than in the best educated college professor. According to the doctrine of evil-lution, monkeys was descended from dogs and man from monkeys, and, therefore, the monkey has less sentiment than the dog and man less than the monkey, it having been civilized out. Now, I never have had a chance to observe regular monkeys, but I've studied my dog William well, and have compared him with me, and I am free to consider myself fairly highly civilized. William he is

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cross-bred—coon-hound and watch-dog—and he is fuller of sentiment than a young ladies' boarding-school. Anything old, anything with associations, William just dotes on—old bones, old clothes, old toys—anything that has age. When I built him a nice new house, down by the barn, he'd never live in it, but kept on sleeping on the pile of rag-carpet on the back porch where he had spent his puphood. He did use to bring in other dogs to show them the house, and he stored his playthings there, but he seemed to think that for regular living he liked the old home best. I mind well the time my wife throwed away her gum shoes. William he come along the street and see three neighbors' dogs dining on them. He knowd them rubbers at once, and at the risk of his life sailed in and rescued them. It cost him a torn ear and the end of his tail, but he got them safe down to his house, and there they are to this day. Once it seemed to me like the place was getting kind of unhealthy with all them heir-looms of his, and I set out to clean it with a rake. The first thing to come out was a gum shoe; then William he run at me with tears

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in his eyes and his teeth showing. I couldn't understand his exact words, but I judged from the way he took on it was something like this: "Don't you dast touch that dear old rubber that mother used to wear." And I didn't.

Again, if you observe, you'll notice that the more thoroughly civilized folks are the less they care about nature. It's simply because they ain't natural any longer. Now, if I set on a hill and look over the walley I don't spend a whole day admiring it. Not a bit. My brain's too active. I speckilate. I begin to question whether the walley is there and I'm here. Mebbe, after all, I am only an idee and the walley an impression, as the professor says. I ain't pop sure that I exist—not being able to prove it—and if I don't exist, the walley, therefore, is nothingness. With William it's different. He's not educated up to such high thinking and can enjoy the scenery. You know that when you see him lying down, with his head between his forepaws, his eyes fixed on the mountains, kind of drinking it all in, when you see him show his teeth and give a gentle wag of his stump tail.

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But I'm not going to speak of William, wonderful dog as he is. He has simply been useful for observation. I had been thinking of Annie May Tubbs, who visited in Harmony, and had been comparing the two. She was the most sentimentalist girl I ever knowd, and, while William could give her points, still she had that wild strain of which I have spoke. Everything affected her terrible. William he howled at the moon; Annie May she only cooed at it; Miss Spiker, who had gradeated at a normal school and was very highly educated, said the night air was obnoxious and she wouldn't contract appendisightis watching any old wore-out planet—which goes to illustrate my point.

Now, most of the weemen of Harmony was very highly educated, for, besides their regular schooling, they had a sewing circle, and a reading circle, and a discussion club. Of course there was some that wasn't so well up, because they had to work, and when you have to cook three meals a day, and clean the house, and weed the garden, and put the children and grandpa to bed you don't have much time to look at the moon and sigh. So when Annie

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May Tubbs came to Harmony to spend the summer with her aunt, Mrs. Stacy Hopper, she was new. We had never seen anything just like her, and was took by storm.

I have said previous that I never really loved but one woman—no man really loves more than one woman, though he may keep company with a dozen and marry the last and be happy ever after. It was Clara Wheedle that was my fate—she of whom I have spoke, who had give up her life for her art and subsequently married the feather-weight champeen of Snyder County. When she left Harmony with her he-ro and her pie-anno it seemed to me like all the world was an arid desert and all weemen was false. From a natural happy, pleasant man, I become melancholy and sour, and set around the store all day saying mean things about the gentle sect, for I had been stabbed in the heart, and, though I might marry and settle down some day and be contented like, I knowd well enough that I had a wound that would never heal, but would keep gently bleeding till I died. That wound is open yet, but it hasn't hindered me getting around fairly well. It didn't prevent me

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either from taking notice of Annie May Tubbs. 'Most anybody would have taken notice of Annie May, for she had a peculiar soft eye, and a kind of clinging figger, and a voice that lingered. The minute I see her setting on the Hoppers' front steps, I began to cheer up, and that night I strolled down to call.

There in the room was Stacy Hopper and Mrs. Hopper and the seven little ones, and Annie May; and when I had been a half hour talking about the crops and Ossy Dinkle's new mare, I noticed that she begin getting more and more onrastless. Finally, when she kind of couldn't stand it any longer, she ups and says: "Come into the garden," she says, speaking like a lady in a book.

I wasn't anxious, for I had on a pair of white canvas long tennis shoes, which was all the rage for evening wear in those days, and my feet looked very fetching in the lamplight, but when them pleading eyes met mine, and the voice kind of lingered, I didn't dare refuse, though Mrs. Hopper was arguing that the grass was wet.

"There's a lovely moon," says Annie May.

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And that settled it. Out we went into the chilly evening, through the wet grass, my new white shoes soaking up the water like sponges, into the garden, till we come to a tomayto frame, where she set down and sighed. And I set alongside of her and was silent, wondering what it was all about.

"Ain't the moon perfect to-night?" she says, very soft.

"It is perfect," I says, "only it's drawing up water, and that means rain to-morrow, and that will spoil the baseball game, and I am going to pitch," I says.

Annie May just sighed. The ice began to freeze on my feet.

"It's blowing up kind of sharp," I says, chattering a little.

"Ah," she says, says she, "doesn't the moon look like a great ball of gold?"

"If it was," I answers, "it wouldn't have been hung there so long." For, as the Good Book says, there was financial giants in those days.

Annie May didn't seem to understand, but kept on treating the moon like it was something

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unusual and had just appeared for the first time.

“Doesn’t a great peace come over you on a night like this,” she says, says she, “when all the world is so beautiful and restful?” she says. “Doesn’t it awaken sweet and tender feelings in your boosum?” she says.

I never heard a girl speak that way before, and it kind of took me back for the minute. But even in the moonlight I could see her eyes, and her voice lingered so that I forgot how uncomfortable I was on that splintery tomayto frame, and begun to feel kind of foolish myself. The trouble was I didn’t know just what to say, for in Harmony we weren’t well trained in moonlight scenes, and, while I was looking around for some nice tender sentiment that would seem fitting to the occasion, she broke in again.

“Doesn’t your heart yearn for some one to love?” she sighs.

When a girl asks you that it’s mighty easy to answer to suit her. I knew just what to say, and I wanted to say it, only my teeth began to chatter and the night air was clinging to my

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chest, choking me badly, and altogether I felt terrible.

"Your silence seems to answer yes," she went on, more lingering than ever.

"Your feet must be getting cold," I says, most unexpected to me. It wasn't what I had allowed to remark at all. What I had really meant to say was "Yes," and no one was more surprised than I, not even Annie May. But she must have been used to being misunderstood, poor girl, for she just sighed and looked up at me. Mebbe she did see that I was more civilized than she was; that I had been brought up to staying indoors by the stove at night, educating myself with books and discussion instead of setting in the damp and raving over a wore-out planet, as Miss Spiker called it. She sighed a couple of times more, and then, for fear she would hear my chill, I chattered again.

"Ah, no," she says, "I love to bathe my feet in the dew," she says, speaking like dew was spelt d-e-u.

Not since I took music lessons from Clara Wheedle had I been so affected. If my feet

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hadn't been so wet, and my teeth chattering so, and my voice so husky, I would have sworn to her then and there that she was the only woman I ever loved; that without her I would pine away and wither like the rose; I would have pleaded with her to flee with me to some far world where for all eternity we could be alone—things I'd allus planned to say to some girl, but could never get out. Sometimes I think I might have got it out then, only a window rattled behind us, and Mrs. Hopper she called to us very sharp.

"You uns will catch your death of cold," she says.

"I have ketched mine already," I answered, very prompt.

"It's sweet out here," says Annie May, "but it isn't the place for timid folks."

She rose very haughty, and from the way she went into the house, so proud and cold, you might have thought she had been explaining politics to me.

Coldness makes the heart grow fonder, as the fellow says, coldness and absence being one and the same. Annie May treated me just like

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I didn't exist, and as the Hopper family were beginning to go to bed there was nothing for me but home. And once home I didn't leave it for a week. That sentimental evening had settled on my chest, and what with chills and mustard plasters there were times when I didn't care whether the spark kept burning or not. I used to lay there figgering on what Preacher Spiegelnail would say in his sermon over me, whether he would point out what a loss Harmony was suffering and how a life full of great promise to humanity had been cut off. It seemed to me like I was going to die beautiful, giving up all for love of woman, and I made a will leaving her my dictionary and a guitar and noting that I forgave her. Then I began to recover.

The first day I was out I started for the store, and just at our gate ran into John Quincy Koons, the town poet.

"Have you met Miss Tubbs yet?" he cries, not waiting to inquire after my health.

"I have," I answers, very stern.

"A lovely woman," he went on in the most enthusiastic manner. "A woman of sentiment,

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of deep feeling, of poetry. She has high ideas of life and things. I would that I was worthy of her."

John Quincy stopped a minute like he was deep distressed, for he knowd how hopeless his love was—he was poor. But, besides being poor and a poet, he wasn't much to look at, being undersized and kind of thin and peekit in the face. Seeing him take it so bad softened me a bit; so says I, "She is a lovely woman."

"Then," says he, "why don't you marry her and make her happy? You are worthy of her; you are handsome and a tasty dresser; your mother has a pension, and, more than all, you are a thinker."

"Quince," says I, "it's good of you to put it that way, but I take cold too easy." With that I went on up the street.

Mebbe I was in the store ten minutes—mebbe it was five—but it wasn't long till a strong odor of liniment entered, followed by young Oriole Jackson, who had his neck all done up in flannel.

"Good-morning, Oriole," says I, in my pleasantest style.

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"Good-bordig," says he. Then he coughed most violent.

"Have you met Annie May Tubbs yet?" I asks, most innocent.

"Do you subbose you're de odly bad ever loogt ad the bood?" he says, getting most het up.

Oriole we heard a loud sneeze on the store ment than a—than me," I says, holding out my hand affectionate. And he took it and shook it most grateful, and set down beside me for company's sake.

Mebbe it was five minutes—mebbe it was ten—but anyway it wasn't long till me and Oriole we heard a loud sneeze on the store porch—then another, and who come in but Ossy Dinkle.

He started to nod all around, but broke it off with a sneeze.

"Good-bording, Oscar," says Oriole Jackson. most sympathetic.

"Good——" says Ossy, breaking off to clap his hand over his mouth. We thought he'd choke, he was so bad, but he got control after a while.

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"I want a box of them Hoskins's Household Candy Cough Drops," he says to the clerk in a hoarse voice.

"Got a cold, Ossy?" I asks, trying to be pleasant.

"Does it sound like rheumatism?" he snaps, most unpolite.

"Wet feet, I allow," says Oriole, giving me a wink.

"Fishing," says Ossy, with a sneeze.

"Wasn't the bood beautiful?" says Oriole, perfectly ca'm.

Ossy he stared at Oriole Jackson a minute, then at me.

"I'm getting over pneumonia," says I, rather sad.

"Oh!" he says. And with that he set down on the bench between us, most friendly, and choked and sneezed for ten minutes, or mebbe it was five, but it isn't any difference, only when he was quiet again he looked at me and then at Oriole. "It's queer," he allowed, "that the three biggest, and handsomest, and eligiblest men in Harmony can't stand sentiment. Further," says he, "it's queer that a thin, deli-

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cate, peekit little fellow like John Quincy Koons thrives on wet feet and full moons."

Ossy Dinkle was right. John Quincy Koons did thrive on wet feet and full moons. If I could have stood the damp like him, my whole life might have changed. If I could have spoke as nice as he about the twinkling stars, the soft music of the crickets, the whispering breezes and such like things that happen on moonlight nights I might have won the most beautiful and charmingest girl that ever come to Harmony. But I'd been too highly civilized, too spoiled by stoves and paytent rockers and headlight lamps, all the modern comforts that keeps us indoors to strengthen our minds and weaken our constitutions. I left the garden and the tomayto frame to John Q. Koons, but nothing ever happened but po-ems. And such po-ems as he wrote! The county paper printed one after Annie May Tubbs finished her visit and went back to Bunkerville. It was called "Alone," and run something like this: "A. M. is gone, the world is dark and drear; the moon no longer shines upon me, dear." Ossy Dinkle he al-

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lowed that "A. M." referred to the forenoon, but when we see "J. Q. K." at the end of the piece we realized that his love had never been damped nor its course turned aside by wet feet.

His love *never was* damped. Neither was Annie May Tubbs's. Of course they never married. Years afterward, when I was doing a little in the line of pumps and lightning-rods down Perry County way, I run across her, setting on her pa's front porch. She was older then, but still had remains. Her hair was falling and she wore spectackles, but the lingering voice was unchanged—soft as ever; and she sighed as she led me into the room.

"Of course you are married by this time," I says, spying around for children.

"Ah, no," she says, looking kind of pathetic at a picture on the wall. "We are waiting—still waiting."

It was John Quincy Koons again, who I'd 'most forgotten—a splendid crayon enlargement, fattened up a bit, but looking soufuller than ever.

"Some day," she says, kind of wistful,

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"some day some one may leave him something, and then we hope to be united at last."

"Meantime he's writing poetry!" says I.

"He's writing dreams," she answered, very proud. "Haven't you seen his 'Ode to Annie May,' in the last Snyder County *Guardeen*?"

"You don't mean to tell me he borrowed money from you, too?" I said, for I never did like John Quincy Koons anyway.

She looked at me most reproachful. "You never had any sentiment in your sordid soul," she said, as stern as she could, in her soft voice.

"Annie May Tubbs," said I, as gentle as I could, "sentiment has been your ruin—without it you might have married money."

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HE had been sitting on the store bench, watching the clouds, listening to the learned discussion that waged about him, when he at length claimed the right that was his by virtue of age and wide experience, and silenced all others to tell his tale.

There is nothing so aggravating as a modest man. Folks that are big feeling and proud just makes me laugh, but these here retiring men that can do everything better than anybody else and then say it don't amount to nothing—they make me boil all over. Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud, as the fellow says. Why? Because, nohow. When we see folks as are bigitive and stuck up we know they have no cause, and sets 'em down as fools. But the more modester a man is the more better you feel he is than you, and if anything makes you boil it is to know that some

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other fellow is your superior, and yet ain't blowing about it. It seems like nature has provided that if a man does anything in this world that is worth doing he must immediately compensate for it by showing it.

The most modest man I ever knowd was Elisha Dumble, who lived with me in the town of Harmony. There was nothing in the world that man couldn't do oncet he set his mind to it, and there was nothing would make him blow about it afterwards.

"What's the use of pride?" he'd say. "S'pose I can beat everybody at checkers, it doesn't amount to anything, anyway. The Almighty made me a good checker-player, and the praise ain't due me, surely."

Then he'd kind of slink away home, like he was ashamed of being seen, instead of walking around town telling everybody how he had give Ossy Dinkle two crowns to start with and beat him easy. Then nobody ever knowd about it till it would slip out of one of the boys who seen the game.

"What," he'd say, "didn't you know how as Elisha give Ossy two crowns and beat him?"

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That would set everybody talking about how modest Elisha was; so he would become conspicuouser than if he had blowed.

If there is anything we humans hate it's an angel—except when we're sick. It's just the same as homely weemen allus making the best friends. The more angelicer the other fellow is the worser you feel yourself, and we are allus more ready to forgive our own wices than we are to forgive another's wirtues. So Elisha Dumble was the most unpopular man in Harmony. Of course some said it was because he had beat everybody at everything, but I figgered it out, and I hold I am right, that the real trouble was he was so modest about it.

I mind the time Harmony had a spelling contest with Popolomus, the last man standing to get a handsome copy of "Pilgrim's Progress." Elisha never made a miss, and when all the others was down and out except him and Henery Bunker, of the opposing team, it was the grandest spelling I ever hear for a whole hour. Then Henery he spelled soupeny with a p, and the prize had otter gone to Elisha; but when Preacher Spiegelnail was approaching with a

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book and a speech, Elisha he disappeared through the window, and we couldn't find him for two days.

"I done nothing to deserve a speech and a prize," he says, "for I'm a natural-born speller, and the praise ain't due me for winning."

It was the same with his music. I never hear a lovelier cornet player, yet it was all we could do to make him blow in church; and when it come to concerts, he'd stand, with his knees shaking and his face as white as snow, playing the exquisitest pieces, while boys like Lucien Wackle, with their horns, had to be kep' off the platform with a club. Once Preacher Spiegelnail referred to him as "the divine songster of Harmony, who with his trumpet calleth us to higher things." And Elisha he almost broke down and cried and said he'd never play again if he was spoke that way of.

"Music is born and not made," he says, "and it ain't for me to take praise for a great talent that come to me from my pa and ma."

So with hog-guessing. Elisha was a born hog-guesser, and the praise wasn't due him because he could shut one eye and look at a pig

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and tell you his weight within a pound and a half. That come to him natural, and I must say it was about the payingest thing he did, for every fall he'd win nine out of ten pools at the store, and I allus figgered that he didn't win that one just to keep up interest. He allus acted like he was ashamed of it, and he'd just take the money and disappear, while Ossy Dinkle, when he got \$3.25 for guessing correctest the weight of Ezra Wackle's hog, drove up and down the walley in a buggy, blowing about how he had beat Elisha.

In checkers, in music, in shooting, in hog-guessing, so in love. Elisha Duple was handsome and an elegant talker, and it seemed like a girl had only to set eyes on him and she'd begin to sigh and pine, and lots of 'em proposed to him on the second meeting. It worried him terrible. I mind once meeting him coming home from a call at the Sizzles's. It seems that he had just refused Rhoda Sizzle, and that she had threatened to drown herself in the well.

"I can't understand weemen," he says to me. "'This here's the third promise of sui-

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cide I've had this year, and all simply because I am handsome and can talk elegant and play checkers. No woman had ought to marry a man for such reasons. If they'd only love me for what I am, and not for what I look like, and for who I have beat, and for how I can sing, then I might consider, but they all falls in love with me for my looks, or my voice, or my checker-playing and hog-guessing, for which no praise is due me, as they come to me natural. What do they amount to, anyhow, in this vain, passing world of ours?"

Now, had Rhoda Sizzle made me an offer of marriage in them days, I'd have taken it quick—mighty quick—and had she throwed herself in the well on my account I'd have jumped with joy. She was, by all odds, the loveliest girl we ever see in Harmony. Clara Wheedle was lovely, but it come mostly from the expression of the eyes and teeth; but for plain out-and-out perfect features, figger and fixings, Rhoda Sizzle was way ahead of her. She come from Turkey Valley to spend the summer with her uncle, the tinsmith, and it wasn't a week till the whole band and all the unmarried boys on

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the baseball nine was crazy about her, and took to spending the entire day lounging around her end o' town in their uniforms.

She was nice to 'em all, till one day she seen Elisha Duple coming along the street, in his retiring, poetic way, and he, happening to look up, she ketched his eye, and he blushed all over and hurried on, which was something that had never happened to her before, as she naturally expected when she looked that way he would come in and set on the porch. Rhoda had never knowd a really modest man, and the quicker he walked on the madder she got. So, one of the baseball boys dropping in, she says, says she, "Who's that pretty man just went up the street, with yeller curly hair and a check waistcoat and pink sleeve-holders?"

And the more she was told who he was and what all he could do the madder she got, and when a woman gets mad at a man that means that love is awakening. From that day she pursued Elisha Duple, and the more she pursued the modester he become and more retiring. One day I found him hiding behind his house under an apple tree, smoking, and I says,

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"Elisha, why don't you end it all and accept her? She's beautiful, and entertaining, and rich," I says, "and, moreover, she's pining away for you."

"I ain't worthy of her," he says, in his modest way. "She's beautiful, and accomplished, and rich, but what am I? Nothing! Nobody! What I've done don't amount to nothing, and simply because I can sing better than any one else—for which the praise isn't due me—and play checkers, and guess hogs it wouldn't be right for me to expect any woman to link her lot with mine."

Just then we seen Rhoda coming down the street, and he dove into the barn, and I didn't see him again till that afternoon I have spoken of, when she told him she would end all. Of course she didn't. Sometimes I think she'd 'a' been happier if she had of, but weemen never do know when they are well off. They always prefers double onhappiness to single blessedness. If she had 'a' drowned herself she wouldn't 'a' been in Harmony when Alexander Hamilton Hummer come to town and put up at the National Hotel and changed Elisha

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Dumple for the better. Alexander was, without doubt, the splendorous-looking specimen I ever see—tall, with black hair and piercing eyes and a flowing black mustache, and never went out without a coat. He was a thorough-going fellow, with elegant ways, and, though we laughed at him at first, we soon knowd better. The evening he arrived he come into the store to get a see-gar, and stopped to watch Ossy Dinkle and Elisha Dumple at checkers. Elisha had given Ossy three crowns and beat him easy, and natural he was surprised when Alexander asked him if he could play, but he was modest and said he couldn't.

"I can't either," says Alexander, "but just for fun I'll try you and give you two crowns."

Elisha smiled, and they went at it. Well, sirs, in about ten minutes the champeen of Harmony was the saddest man I ever see. He tried a second game, and was worse beat, and then he went stamping out of the store, growling how as he did not care, as he had beat Ossy Dinkle anyway. Alexander Hamilton said it didn't amount to anything, as he had come natural by it. He strolled back to the

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hotel, and soon we heard the loveliest piano playing and him a-singing, in a clear, sweet tenor voice that brought tears to your eyes. Preacher Spiegelnail happened by, and consequently in church next Sunday Mr. Hummer sung the solo while the collection was taken up, and Elisha Dumble was moved down to second bass. On the way home Elisha button-holed me and asked me if I minded the time the preacher had referred to him as the "divine songster of Harmony." I told him I didn't, and he said folks never was appreciated in this world, but, anyway, he still believed he could sing better than him—pointing to Alexander Hamilton Hummer, walking with Rhoda Sizzle, his arm hooked under her elbow as he helped her along.

That afternoon I went up to call on Rhoda, and found her setting on the porch in a hammock, a perfect picter, with Alexander Hummer on one side and Elisha Dumble on the other.

"I did enjoy your singing in church so much," she says, smiling all over Mr. Hummer.

"It didn't amount to anything," said Mr.

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Hummer, most modest. "What voice I have is natural, and therefore I feel that no praise is due me when I can't help singing."

"I never hear 'Peace, Be Still!' better rendered," says Rhoda, most enthusiastic.

"You never hear me sing it, did you?" asks Elisha Dumble, speaking up in a dry, husky voice.

"No, I have not been so unfortunate—I mean fortunate," Rhoda answers.

"Mebbe you don't know that I am popularly called the divine songster of Harmony?" says Elisha, getting all het up.

"I am sure that you sing much better than me," says Alexander Hamilton Hummer, in the kindest, modestest way.

"And I didn't come by it natural," says Elisha, swelling his chest. "What voice I've got is my own—cultivated and worked up. Nuther pa nor ma knowd a note."

"You used to be good at checkers, too," says I, just to help him along.

"I give Ossy Dinkle three crowns and beat him," says Elisha, swelling his chest. "And I'm willing to bet a dollar here and now that

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I can beat Mr. Hummer, playing him with one eye shut."

"Of course you can," says Mr. Hummer, very retiring, "You are a far better player than me, only luck has been against you."

With that Mr. Hummer kind of shuts Elisha off, and began to talk most delightful about his adventures on the road selling see-gars, and about Philadelphia, and Harrisburg, and different cities he had seen. But you couldn't keep Elisha Dumble quiet. He broke in and said he had seen all them places, and told about the time he had won six hog-guessing contests in a row, making a grand total of \$13.65 profits. Then he told how, when he was at the normal school, he had been voted by the young ladies to be the handsomest gentleman scholar. Then he told how he had beat Ezra Wackle shooting at a mark and had spelled down the Popolomus champeen. It was disgusting the way he talked, but he seemed more natural and more human than he had been, and I forgive him, though I didn't stay to hear no more.

Well, that very night I see Elisha a-going up to Rhoda Sizzle's, and next morning, when

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I met him on the street, he held out his hand and says: "Congratulate me. I have won the sweetest girl in Harmony in face of the heaviest opposition. I've beat out that there Hummer fellow, with all his looks and city ways and proud talk. He was just mad about Rhoda, but she preferred me."

Elisha Dumble laughed like he'd die.

"Won't he be crazy when he hears about it?" he says, pointing to the hotel, where Alexander Hamilton Hummer was helping a woman and some seven children out of the stage.

"I'll tell him now," says Elisha, hurrying along.

But when we come up Alexander Hamilton says, most pleasant, before we could speak: "Gentlemen, I want you to meet my wife and children."

Elisha Dumble almost broke down and cried. He'd 'a' become retiring again and would have run away, but she wouldn't let him. He see his mistake too late, and to-day, if you go to Harmony, you'll find him, setting around telling how he beat Ossy Dinkle, giving him five crowns, in 1888, and how he won ten hog-guess-

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ings in a row in 1891, clearing \$56.30 profit, and how Preacher Spiegelnail and all the folks that knowd used to speak of him as "Angel-Voiced Dumble." Sometimes he tells how he won his wife against overwhelming odds, though, if you see her to-day, you'd wonder why he was so anxious for her.

But, anyway, if you observe, you'll notice that, generally speaking, only them is modest as can afford it.

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HE laid a penny on the counter, took a stogie, lighted it, fixed himself comfortably on a nail-keg and began his discourse.

A man who is contented may be happy, but he is a general nuisance. There is nothing more aggravating in a civilized community than a fellow who is allus smiling and singing, allus good to everybody and wishing everybody was as happy as him. A certain amount of happiness is necessary to make life bearable; too much of it would make life uninteresting. To be completely happy is wrong. Nothing upsets a community more than one of these here blissful folks who never lets himself be swamped under an avalanche of troubles, but allus bobs up serene and smiling and singing. Such a disposition is onnatural, for, you'll notice, if you observe—you'll notice how as nature treats everybody about alike. When

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crops is poor it hits the whole walley, not just the one farm, and when one man makes a whole lot more money than anybody else he gets heart trouble or asthma. It's curious that nature don't lop off these completely happy folks, but I s'pose they are so few in number it isn't worth while bothering. You can figger on about one in every walley, and he is just as conspicuous as a drunken man in church, and makes the same amount of trouble.

The most contentedest man I ever knowd was Llwellyn Lilly, who lived at the fur end of Harmony when I was there. His ma told mine that she could not remember the time when her boy wasn't smiling in that blissful way of his. He had come into the world smiling contented and kept it up. He wasn't born with a silver spoon in his mouth nuther. It was a wooden one, with the bowl broke off; but I mind him once speaking of it in prayer meeting, and he said it tasted just the same as gold to him, because he had peace in his heart. He wanted every one else to foller him and have the same contented life, but I allus figgered that if we did we'd all soon starve to death. Me and

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Llewellyn went to school together as boys, and I must say he was easy to get along with, simply because he always give in. If I called him a fraidy-cat he wouldn't get his fists up and come at me head down. No, sir. He'd smile. "I am what I am," he'd say. "And what I am I was born, and if I was born a fraidy-cat I can't change it, and there's no sense of my getting mad at you for telling the truth. If you ain't telling the truth it's simply your mistake, and I have every reason to be all the more pleased!" Then he would smile most contented.

I mind another day, when I was a-standing on the bridge, looking into the water and beller, and beller, and beller, because I'd dropped my best glass-alley into the creek. Llewellyn he come along, whistling merrier than a meadow-lark, and when he seen me, says he, he says, "What's the matter?"

"I've lost my best marble," says I, between bellers.

"Which goes to show," says he, "that marbles is a source of unhappiness. Now, my ma is what your folks calls poor, and I can't have

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any marbles, and not having 'em I can't lose 'em, and when I see you a-howling and a-bellering like that it makes me more contenteder than ever."

Anybody can see that, figgering that way, him is most contentedest who has nothing in this world to lose and didn't gain nothing for fear he might lose it, which is to say that one of them Fiji Island men, who was an orphan, so had no parents to lose, and an old bachelor, and therefore no children, and could wear a few leaves and live on the bandanas fresh from the tree, would live a happier life than the old Squire, who has more money than he can possibly spend. Now, I'm not saying but what that's the right idee and one that could be carried out if it wasn't fer the weemen and children, neither of which is philosophical nor naturally contented. I know that Llewellyn's ma was never wery contented—she had to work too much, as all they had was their house and lot and the pension she got from the Government because her first husband had been killed hunting wild turkeys. Her disposition was ruther sour-like, but she said that she was sat-

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isfied to see him happy and smiling and singing, and that he talked so beautiful and done so many kind things for others she hadn't the heart to spoil his life.

He did do kind things. I mind the winter when old man Croke was laid up with rheumatism, and couldn't drive the stage, and was very hard up. Llewellyn Lilly he spoke about it in church meeting, and he got up a subscription paper and made Percy Berry head it with fifty cents, and, though, of course, he having nothing didn't put down nothing, he convinced the town that one of life's greatest pleasures was to give to others, and so collected \$7.33 for the sufferer. Then he got up a plan to have the weemen of the town read to the old man every afternoon, and when pneumonia set in he had his ma stay three nights nursing the patient. That was Llewellyn Lilly all the time, allus thinking of others, and doing things for others, and smiling, and singing. He used to come down to store and argy how much more blessedder it was to give than to receive, and once he told us that his only ambition in life was to be a continual ray of sunshine to

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them among whom he was throwed. So we kind o' forgot his regular name, and for some years he was allus spoke of as Sunshine Lilly.

I ain't agin sunshine, but the trouble was we was sunburnt up in Harmony, and the rays got so strong at times that some of us used to wish we could get in the shade and cool off. The man as was most het up about it was Simon Wackle, who did most of the town hauling, and was natural ruther upset when the oldest of his span of mules died—died, if I mind right, on the wery same day as Sunshine Lilly lost his mother. Preacher Spiegelnail he went down to Lillys' to console with the bereaved and found him sitting on the front porch, smoking and smiling most contented, which kind of took the good brother off his feet. The preacher he was a nice man, but mournful, and, while he had allus p'inted out Sunshine as the loveliest character in Harmony, he kind o' felt he wasn't conducting himself conventional under such like circumstances.

"Llewellyn," he says, most solemn, "this is a time when you should mourn."

"Why should I mourn?" says Llewellyn

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Lilly. "I feel, dear brother, that mother is happier where she is. This is a season of content for me, therefore."

There being nothing for Preacher Spiegelnail to console about, he turned and went up the street till he come to Wackles', where Simon was sitting on the doorstep, the picter of misery.

"Cheer up, Brother Wackle," says Mr. Spiegelnail, in his mournfullest voice, "I ain't heard of any great grief crossing your threshold."

"I've lost a mule," says Simon, most pathetic.

"Only a mule!" says the preacher. "Shame on you, Simon Wackle. You should go see our young friend Sunshine Lilly."

With that he set down beside Simon and told him how he had gone down to console with the bereaved, and what he had said to Sunshine, and what Sunshine had said to him.

Simon Wackle he smoked a long time. Then he says, says he: "Well, I can easy believe Mrs. Lilly is contenteder where she is, but I ain't so sure about my mule."

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Which goes to show that Simon Wackle was not so happy a man as Llewellyn Lilly, but yet was much more natural. The way he talked about our young friend was something dreadful, and I must say that when we seen that nothing could disturb Llewellyn's peace of mind it preyed on us awful. If there is anything makes you feel sinful and low-down unhappy and desperate, it's having an angel around continual. We all concided that we would get along better if we was either rid of Sunshine Lilly or spoiled him. Many a night we set around the store figgering how we could make him unhappy, but we couldn't conjure up a plan. First we thought his mother's pension stopping would kind of shake him up, but it seems the Government didn't hear about his bereavement for some months, and the money kept right on coming. When it did stop Llewellyn just smiled.

"It's pleasant to think," he says, "that the great American Government should take enough notice of my humble ma to stop her pension," he says.

It did seem that there was nothing in the

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world that could spoil a disposition like that, and we gloomy folks in Harmony grew gloomier day by day. Solomon said that the good die young, and he was a most wise man, meaning, of course, that they live just as long as there is some one to support them. If they have to support themselves they become spoiled, naturally. The time seemed to have come when Sunshine Lilly either had to die or change, for his last dollar was gone and there was nothing left him but a house and lot; so we begun to hope that one thing or another would happen. Something did happen, and it only made him contenteder than ever, and he smiled broader and sang louder and more feelingly in church, and you could hear him whistle from one end of town to the other. One of his best admirers was Laura Wilt, who taught the infant class in Sunday-school, and for some years had p'inted him out to the scholars as the most lovable gentleman in the whole walley; so it was an open secret that she'd 'a' married him, only she couldn't afford it; but her uncle up and died, and in three days she had moved down to Llewellyn's, and for a

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while they was the happiest, contentedest pair I ever see. She was allus thinking of him, and he was allus thinking of other people. Preacher Spiegelnail said one day, right out in store, as he came down to get his mail, he said that when he see two such lovely characters mated it made him feel that the outlook for this world might not be so dark as he had hoped.

“It’s like a great burst of sunshine when I see them two setting together in church,” he said. “They are so beamingly happy, so sure of a joyful life in this world and a still joyfuller one in the next; they seems an oasis in a desert of unhappy, unpeaceful faces—faces that shows plainly the disposition to swaller a lion and strain at a mule.”

The preacher was looking right at Simon Wackle, and Simon he got so mad he blowed hot coals out of his pipe all over his beard, so agin he had beat the fire out he was most upset. He didn’t say nothing, but I noticed that next week he took his one remaining mule up to Fairview, where there was nothing but Presbyterians, and stayed there till he died.

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There was some startling changes in Harmony that week, but, though I would not say positive that it was the uplifting influence of Mr. and Mrs. Sunshine Lilly, it did seem like they mowt have had something to do with it. Ossy Dinkle he went to Philadelphy and got work on a street car; Percy Berry he got a place as an attendant in the insane asylum at Harrisburg, and I walked over to Snyder County and stayed there nine years, visiting Mother's relations.

When I come back to Harmony, verry natural, the first thing I done was to go to store, and who should I see standing behind the counter clerking, about the sourest, most unhappiest, discontentedest looking person as ever come within my view—who but Llewellyn Lilly!

“Why, hello, Sunshine!” I says, a-holding out my hand most affectionate.

He didn't take it. He picked up a bung-starter ruther threatening. “Don't you mention that name again,” he says, looking very fierce.

Natural I set down on the bench and stared

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at him, and he stared back, glowering like he'd eat me.

"Llewellyn," I says, "what in the world has come over you that has changed you so for the better?"

He looked around and see there was no one in the store. His face softened some. "I'm married," he said, rather hoarse.

"But you was married before I went visiting," says I. "Mrs. Lilly, she was contented, too. Has she changed for the better?"

"She has changed," he answers, not committing himself.

"I allow there must be some little Lillys," I ventured, the idee just striking me.

"Three beds full," says Llewellyn. "Aged eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one."

"Splendid!" I says.

"Mebbe it is," says Llewellyn Lilly, ruther mournful. "Still I can't say as I'm as happy and contented as I used to be, for Laura she has to do plain sewing and I have to clerk, and we don't have no time to do good to others."

"You can't smile and sing much," says I.

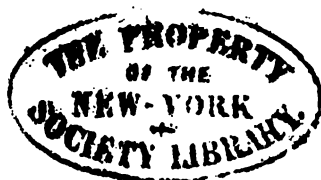
"No," he says, gloomier than ever. "But

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I s'pose there are compensations. I've a wife and children and a home."

"Llewellyn Lilly," says I, wery solemn, "if you observe, you'll notice that as soon as a man begins to shine wery lovely in this world a woman puts him out."

THE END



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